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Editor's Note



I'm an indoor gardener at heart.

Mainly because my initial interest in gardening was sparked by flowering houseplants. As a young teenager, I expressed an interest in a friend's father's collection of African violets. He showed me how to start new plants from leaf cuttings and sent me home with a couple of plants all my own. Before long, my enthusiasm for these rewarding houseplants—and my success for growing violets on my windowsill—quickly outgrew that father's armchair botanical knowledge. So he jotted down the address of a woman who lived nearby and suggested I contact her. Without a second thought, I pedaled over to the address, and knocked on the door of Mary Mahen. She didn't seem surprised to find an earnest boy with a decidedly green heart standing on her doorstep inquiring about African violets. She invited me inside to her basement and what I saw simply blew my adolescent mind: hundreds, perhaps thousands, of African violets of every color and description blooming under rows of grow-lights in every imaginable shade. Mary was, after all, the president of the Missouri African Violet Society. She eventually sent me home with my bicycle basket overflowing with fresh cuttings and brand-new plants. By the time I graduated from high school, the basement of my parents' house was filled with every tropical flowering houseplant I could get my hands on: peperomias, aralias, gloxinias, gardenias, bromeliads, cyclamen, begonias, *Abutilon*, even orchids. *Indoor Gardening & Houseplants* is for beginners, green thumbs, decorators, and anyone who wants to infuse a bit of refreshing green into their decor.

James A. Baggett, Editor

The Basics

GET THE DIRT ON WHAT IT TAKES TO CULTIVATE HEALTHY PLANTS INDOORS. START WITH A FEW POTTING SOIL POINTERS AND FERTILIZER FACTS, THEN CHOOSE THE BEST CONTAINERS FOR YOUR PLANTS AND GIVE THEM THE RIGHT LIGHT AND WATER.

WRITER: KATE CARTER FREDERICK
PHOTOGRAPHERS: MARTY BALDWIN, BLAINE MOATS, AND DEAN SCHOEPPNER



Get the Dirt

All plants depend on good soil for their prosperity. But all potting mixes are not created equal. The term "potting soil" is generic in the marketplace. Unless a package indicates the ingredients, it is difficult to know what you are buying. Potting soil varies considerably, but it is often little more than sterilized topsoil, which by itself is much too heavy for potted plants. Container plants need porous soil that holds some moisture but also drains well and is rich in nutrients.

For most container gardens, choose a potting mix. Ready-made packaged mixes usually contain organic matter (peat moss, coir [coconut husk], or decomposed bark) and some form of aggregate (perlite, vermiculite, or sand) in various proportions. These ingredients allow water to properly drain, enabling air to penetrate the soil.

Read the package label to determine if the mix is adequate for your plants' needs or if you will need to add ingredients to make an ideal mix. Experiment with potting mixes to see which ones work best for your plants.

Soilless mixes drain well and dry out quickly. They're good for starting seeds and rooting cuttings. If a lightweight mix based on peat or coir also contains sterilized soil or compost, it will hold moisture and nutrients longer, and it will add to the weight needed to keep a tall potted plant from toppling over.

Customize a potting mix based on individual plant needs and save money by adding ingredients to a standard potting mix. Potting mixes for flowering plants typically contain more organic materials that retain moisture, such as leaf mold (decomposed leaves) or compost. A moisture-holding mix usually includes water-retentive polymer crystals and suits plants that prefer damp soil. An organic potting mix suits edibles. A desertlike potting mix that contains equal parts sand, perlite, and potting soil provides porous, fast-draining conditions for cacti and succulents. Amendments, such as granular or slow-release fertilizer, compost, composted manure, and leaf mold contribute to a premium potting mix.



Perlite, made from heat-puffed granules of volcanic ash, helps soil drain and resist compaction.

Horticultural charcoal can be added to absorb odors from plant decay and prevent soil from becoming funky.

Shredded peat moss is partially decomposed plant material that absorbs moisture and nutrients like a sponge. Coir substitutes for this limited resource.

All-purpose potting mixes often combine peat moss or coir, compost, vermiculite or perlite, and coarse sand. Slow-release fertilizer and water-holding granules add utility.

Vermiculite—micalike flakes mined from ore—absorbs water, releases it slowly, and keeps the mix porous.

Lightweight soilless mixes usually contain a combination of peat moss, vermiculite, and perlite. They're ideal for starting seeds or cuttings.



Above: When using dry fertilizer granules or pellets, carefully scratch them into the soil. Water after adding dry plant food to the soil.

Fertilizers and More

High-performance plants need nutrients to produce vigorous foliage and bright blooms. Regular fertilizing during the growing season is important to keep potted plants healthy, because frequent watering flushes important nutrients out of the soil. More frequent fertilizing is needed by some plants, including vigorous growers, flowering plants, and those growing in soilless mix. Less frequent feeding is required by other plants, such as many foliage-type houseplants, citrus, cacti, succulents, and plants that rest or go dormant over winter.

The numbers

Although fertilizer can be called plant food, plants make their own food via photosynthesis. Fertilizer amends the soil with the nutrients plants need most. The three key nutrients are nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Nitrogen is needed for stem growth and green leaves; phosphorus fuels strong roots and flowering; potassium enhances stem strength, disease resistance, and formation of flowers and fruit. Fertilizer labels indicate the percentage of these nutrients as a series of numbers. For example, 15-30-15, which is ideal for flowering plants, means that 15 percent of the product's weight is nitrogen; 30 percent is phosphorus; and 15 percent is potassium. An all-purpose, 30-30-30 blend suits most plants.

Types of fertilizers

Plant foods come in various forms that are applied in different ways. What matters most is that fertilizer must be dissolved to be of use to plants; soil moisture dissolves nutrients so they can be absorbed by plant roots. Water-soluble crystalline, granular, or liquid fertilizers are convenient to use by diluting with water. A solution reduces the potential for damage caused when excess fertilizer burns roots and leaves. Dry plant foods include granules, powdery crystals, slow-release pellets, and spikes. You can make multiple applications of a soluble fertilizer that is taken up relatively quickly by plants and used up within about a month or make fewer applications of a less-soluble fertilizer. Slow-release formulas are made for a single yearly application and last for six to nine months under average growing conditions. Organic fertilizers include compost, fish emulsion, worm castings, and kelp products. Edible plants and long-term plantings benefit from organic plant foods that enrich soil and improve its structure.

Applying plant food

Follow package directions when using fertilizer. Feeding plants is not advised when they are wilted, sickly, or lacking light. Under most circumstances, you'll need to fertilize plants regularly during spring and summer, when they're actually growing. Skipping or missing a dose of plant food does not have the same deleterious effects as forgetting to water. Overfertilizing hurts plants more than it helps them and shows up in crispy, burned leaves, poorly shaped leaves, and white crust on the soil surface or inside the pot's rim.



Slow-release fertilizers are coated so they break down slowly and release nutrients gradually.



Water-absorbing polymer crystals help minimize watering because they store excess moisture and release it over time. Buy potting mix with crystals already included or add them yourself.

Water-soluble fertilizer is mixed with water and applied frequently throughout the growing season.



Granular fertilizer works best when blended into potting mix before planting. Use it according to the product manufacturer's directions.



Choose the Right Containers

As the home for plants, containers provide adequate space for roots to develop and plants to grow and flourish. Coordinate plants and pots with your home's style for decorative results. Acquire quality containers that can withstand rough handling and outdoor conditions, so they—and the plants they hold—can be moved outside for the summer.

Consider a container's size, weight, and shape relative to the plant. Select a container that is one-third of the plant-pot combination for balance of scale. A pot 2 inches wider than the plant's root ball gives the plant growing room—but not too much. A too-large pot appears disproportionate and holds more moisture than the plant needs. Some plants need cozy quarters to grow well, but small pots require watering more often. Heavier containers stabilize their contents, preventing toppling of top-heavy plants. Lighter-weight pots are more easily portable. Balance an upright plant in a tall pot, a mounding plant in a square pot, and a trailing or arching plant in a V-shape pot.

Drainage

A potted plant's survival depends on a drainage hole or other means of releasing excess water. Without adequate drainage, the plants' roots can suffocate and rot. If a container doesn't come with at least one drainage hole, drill one.

In lieu of drilling into a container, use it as a decorative cachepot instead, hiding the nursery pot inside it. When watering a plant in a cachepot, pour off any excess water that drains from the nursery pot and is not absorbed into the potting mix.

Material matters

Key to a plant's success is the container's ability to hold soil and moisture, which depends on its construction material. Porous materials, such as terra cotta and wood, dry out faster and are good for plants that prefer soil on the dry side. Nonporous materials, including plastic, metal, and glazed ceramic, hold moisture longer and more evenly. Well-made containers stand up to watering and weather. Unless treated with a waterproof sealant, wet wood rots and metal corrodes.

Types of Containers

Available in an enormous range of styles and materials, containers accent the color and style of a home, whether they're new or old, and even whether they hold plants or not. Each type has benefits and drawbacks for you to consider.



Terra cotta
Affordable terra cotta is weighty, porous, washable, and breakable. High-fired terra cotta is most durable; handmade and Mexican pots are fragile.



Glazed ceramic
Choose from an array of colors and patterns that complement a room's decor. Handle ceramics carefully to avoid chipping. Ceramic pots are weightier.



Woven
Sturdy and attractive options include an array of materials, even plastic and metal. Natural materials require more protection from moisture damage.



Wood
Line wooden containers with plastic before planting or use them to hold pots. Choose rot-resistant cedar or wood that has been painted, stained, or sealed.



Repurposed
Turn all sorts of objects into planters: old coffee cans with rusty patina, desk drawers, beach buckets, wastebaskets, etc. Drill a drainage hole.



Plastic
Plastic is lightweight, relatively unbreakable, and easy to clean and store. Prices vary widely with finish and quality; some are long lasting.



Vintage
Planters from another era have collectability and charm. Pots with chips, peeling finishes, or other imperfections may be available at a discount. Use them only indoors.



Recycled
A new generation of eco-friendly containers made from recycled plastic, paper, rubber, or other materials save these resources from landfills.



Metal
Galvanized metal, copper, and zinc offer versatile style and long life. Shiny metal surfaces fade into subtle patinas unless they're powder coated, painted, or polished.



Self watering
A built-in reservoir allows plants to draw moisture from it as needed. This is a valuable service for plants that like evenly moist soil.





Above left: Most homes, even the smallest apartments, offer diverse light conditions. Each setting is an opportunity for different plants. Foliage plants usually need less light than flowering ones. Above right: A clamp-on fixture provides an attractive means of shining full-spectrum light onto plants in an otherwise dark corner. Outfitted with a grow bulb, the setup works for small table lamps, too.

The Right Light

Light is vital to plants. Their ability to grow, maintain health, and produce flowers depends on light. If a plant is in more or less light than it needs for optimum growth, it will be stressed and more prone to problems, such as weak growth, minimal flowering, disease, and pests. Too much light may cause whitish scorched marks on foliage, wilted and shriveled leaves, or bleached leaves. Symptoms of insufficient light include stretching or leaning toward a light source; sparse or spindly growth; loss of foliage color or variegation; and smaller, thinner, easily damaged leaves.

Before you bring a plant indoors, identify the amount of light it will need and the location where that light is available. Experiment until you discover where the light in your home best suits a plant.

A plant tag usually tells you what level of light a plant needs: low, medium, or bright. Ideal light levels vary by plant species and sometimes by cultivar. Low light may be enough to keep a plant alive but not enough to promote flowering. Bright, direct light in a south- or west-facing window suits succulents and seedlings, but it could toast African violets and bromeliads. Look for shadows—the brighter the light, the stronger the shadows.

Intensity

The closer to a window, the more intense the light, depending on the geographic location and time of year. Sheer curtains diffuse bright light and help prevent the sunburning indicated by yellow- to brown-scorched leaves. Winter light is less intense than summer light, but it extends farther into a room because the sun is lower in the sky.

Quality

Sunlight is the best source of full-spectrum light for plants. Supplement natural light with artificial light to provide plants with the amount and quality of light (light wavelengths in the red-blue spectrum) they need to thrive.

Duration

Most indoor plants need 8 to 16 hours of light daily. Many plants' blooms are triggered by day and night cycles.

Supplemental light

When natural light is inadequate, supplement it to help plants thrive, especially during winter. Seedlings and flowering houseplants, such as African violets and begonias, benefit from an added light source. Fluorescent tubes, including cool- and warm-white tubes, are available in various shapes and sizes at hardware stores. Full-spectrum fluorescent lights are best for plant growth, although fluorescent lights do help.



Left *A pebble tray is one of the easiest ways to boost humidity. Add pebbles to a saucer or tray and cover the stones with water; avoid letting pots and plant roots stand in water, which will promote rot.* **Below** *For plants that are finicky about watering, use a moisture meter to measure the soil's water content. Meters are inexpensive and take the guesswork out of watering.*



How to Water

As with the other elements, a plant's need for water is individual, and there are many variables. A plant's needs change with the seasons, as plants absorb more water when the light is bright, temperature is high, and humidity is low. The thirstiest plants include those with flowers, large leaves, tropical or marshy origins, or large root balls in a confined space. A lightweight soilless potting mix dries out faster than heavy potting soil, and small pots dry out faster than large ones. Fast-growing plants (ferns, dracenas, palms) need more water than slower-growing ones (holiday cactus, *Sansevieria*).

Check the soil of indoor potted plants weekly by feeling the soil before watering or using a moisture meter. Using your finger as a dipstick, poke it into soil up to the first knuckle to determine if the soil has begun to dry; up to the second knuckle to feel for moisture. You will learn to feel the difference in soil that is dry, damp, moist, and wet, and when water should be added to maintain a level of moisture or dryness.

Overwatering is the single-most common cause of indoor plant death. Underwatering and overwatering can have the same symptoms: wilting, pale, lackluster, and dropping foliage. Without enough water, a plant becomes stunted; leaves turn yellow or brown. With too much water, roots can't function normally and the plant suffocates.

Each plant also has preferences for moisture and heat, depending on its origin from a tropical, desert, or other climate. Most plants adjust to indoor conditions. As the conditions change seasonally, be aware of how your indoor plants will be affected.

Humidity

Moisture in the air is just as important to a plant as moisture in the soil. Warm air holds more water so humidity tends to be higher in the summer, although air conditioning lowers humidity. In the winter, when a heating system dries the air, boost humidity by grouping plants or using a room vaporizer, a pebble tray for a potted plant, or a terrarium.

Temperature

The year-round temperature between 60°F and 75°F (and cooler at night) in typical homes suits most plants. Indoor temperatures vary from season to season, room to room, and within a room. Warm air rises, making a toasty place on top of a bookcase; cool air sinks, making the air near the floor cooler.

Air circulation

Movement of air benefits plants by evaporating moisture from leaves and preventing disease, promoting denser and sturdier growth, and keeping some insect populations in check. Open a window in mild weather to increase air circulation. In winter, move air with a ceiling fan or small fan placed near plants.

Plant Signals

Plants have ways of showing you when the conditions are not suitable. They show symptoms of stress that give you clues if a change is needed in their environment or care regimen.



Humidity

Too little: Leaf tips brown and shrivel as on this fern; leaf edges turn yellow. Buds fall off and blossoms wither.

Too much: Plants are more susceptible to rot, mold, and mildew.



Temperature

Too cold: Leaves curl, turn black or brown, wilt, and fall off; buds drop when conditions are too chilly. Plant tissues, such as roots, can freeze and die.

Too warm: Lower leaves wilt and turn brown. Flowers die quickly. The plant produces small leaves or weak, leggy growth.



Air circulation

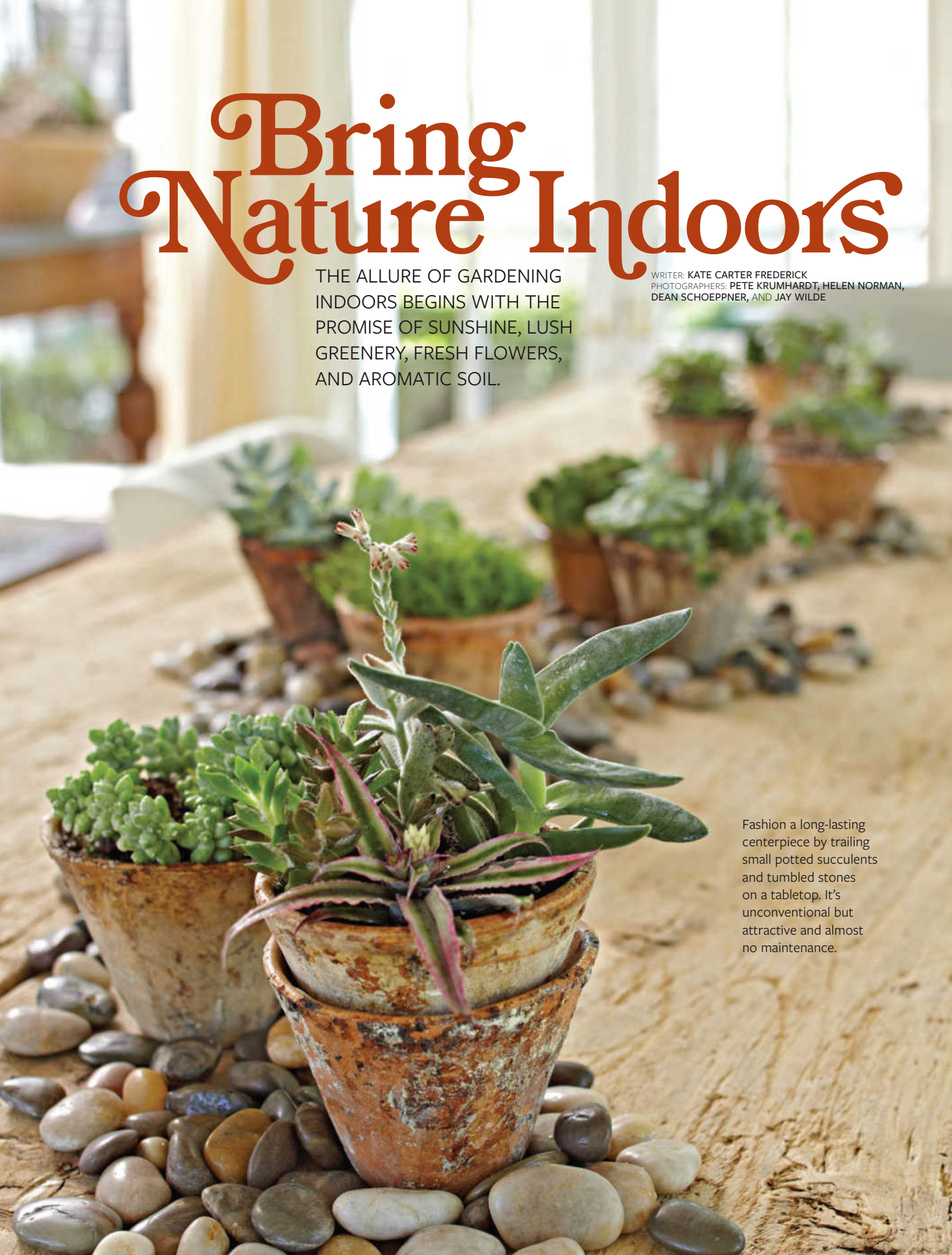
Too little: Fungal disease (powdery mildew, *above,* on rosemary) or insect problems (white flies) may proliferate.

Too much: Wind shreds leaves, dries soil, and shakes off buds and flowers.

Bring Nature Indoors

THE ALLURE OF GARDENING INDOORS BEGINS WITH THE PROMISE OF SUNSHINE, LUSH GREENERY, FRESH FLOWERS, AND AROMATIC SOIL.

WRITER: KATE CARTER FREDERICK
PHOTOGRAPHERS: PETE KRUMHARDT, HELEN NORMAN, DEAN SCHOEPPNER, AND JAY WILDE



Fashion a long-lasting centerpiece by trailing small potted succulents and tumbled stones on a tabletop. It's unconventional but attractive and almost no maintenance.







Joys of Gardening Indoors

The soul-soothing process of coaxing plants to grow in a sunny window keeps people close to nature, especially when winter wind rattles the glass and snow piles up outside the sill. Adding life, producing fresh air, and reducing indoor air pollution, plants make homes more livable. Watching seeds sprout and bulbs grow overnight brings the pride, joy, and astonishment that only nature inspires.

With nothing more than potted plants, you can create a fragrant, blooming indoor haven that is every bit as pleasurable as a conventional garden. Gardening indoors isn't the same as digging into a yard. But it enables you to garden if your home has no yard or when the climate forces you indoors. Everyone has a reason for gardening, whether it's a passion for plants, solace, entertainment, artistic inspiration, personal satisfaction, religion, or way of life. The sheltering walls and sunny windows indoors make it possible—whatever the weather.

Although indoor gardening trends come and go—from macramé plant hangers to the latest craze over air plants—enthusiasm for tropical plants persists and tried-and-true houseplants remain. New hybrids of houseplants with tropical origins prove easier to grow with less light and little maintenance. Sturdy *Anthurium* and indestructible *Sansevieria* join the adaptable ZZ plants in the easy-growing category. New color patterns of Chinese evergreens and dracenas turn houseplants into home decor accessories. A trip to the grocery or building supply store can expand your indoor gardening horizon when you bring home an unexpected orchid or other blooming treasure. Once hard-to-find plants are now common and affordable.

Above left: Create more interesting vignettes by combining indoor plants with select items, such as a glass cloche, birdhouse, and glass orbs. **Top right:** Small trees suited to indoor spaces such as this *Ficus benjamina* share living quarters with small ferns. **Above, bottom right:** A shallow concrete planter holds creeping moss, a lemon cypress, and a fairy house.



A ceramic serving bowl provides a home for succulents, cacti, and *Kalanchoe*. The container lacks a drainage hole, so it is half-filled with gravel and sand.







Year-Round Gardening

Gardening indoors is just the right antidote to cabin fever when winter keeps people housebound. For the veteran grower, winter signals neither the end of the gardening season nor the only time for indoor gardening, but simply the start of another cycle. Some newbie plant handlers might wince at the thought of keeping plants alive indoors. But a single flowering plant, even kept only temporarily, provides encouragement rather than demands.

An indoor garden brings spring to the frozen North and creates jungles in the desert. After all, a home gardener can control the climate indoors. And fortunately for the gardener, plants have no idea whether they are growing in a guest room or a greenhouse. All they need is a smattering of sun, a dependable supply of water, reasonably benevolent temperatures, adequate nutrients, and a whiff of fresh air now and then. No matter where you live, you can have fresh herbs and other edibles indoors year-round with natural or supplemental light or both.

Above left: A sunny window and a few feet of counter space provide a perfect place for plants and potting. **Top right:** Bromeliads create the festive ambience for a party and last longer than any cut flowers. **Above, bottom right:** Cans that held imported tomatoes house a kitchen window herb garden.



In late winter or early spring, when the surroundings outdoors are typically dreary, a colorful tabletop garden sings a lovely song of spring. Cheery pansies, violas, and crocuses join hyacinths, daffodils, and pussy willow branches in glazed pots.


African violet





It's a Gift

As a long-lasting and cheerful gift, a plant is sure to please. A large potted amaryllis bulb will flower dependably and sometimes perform spectacularly with successive blooms in exchange for only occasional watering. Whether the recipient is a gardener or not, a plant is intended as a token that lasts longer than cut flowers. Any plant, from the smallest herb to the largest ornamental tree, helps extend the gardening year.

Plants add color, fragrance, and timeless appeal to some of life's most memorable moments. Seasonal beauties bring symbolic connections to holidays and form an integral part of traditions. For example, as a Thanksgiving cactus cherished by generations of a family reblooms annually, it reminds them of those who have passed and shared their penchant for gardening with heirloom cuttings. Poinsettias and tabletop evergreen trees add to winter celebrations with their festive charms. Easter lilies trumpet spring; chrysanthemums complete autumn gatherings. Flowering bulbs create a season-to-season parade, including winter amaryllis, daffodils, lilies, and autumn crocuses.

Typically, seasonal plants are grown in the ideal conditions of a greenhouse and forced into bloom at a time not in sync with their natural growth and life cycle. Some specialty plants last only a few weeks; others live on for months or even years.

Top right: This grouping features cyclamen, star of Bethlehem (*Ornithagalum umbellatum*), and *Kalanchoe* in a long-lasting winter display.
Above, bottom right: Different types of *Euphorbia*—a white poinsettia and the frilly 'Diamond Frost' euphorbia—combine with fresh-cut evergreens in a wrought iron basket.



Enjoy the air-cleaning effect created by a variety of houseplants, including clockwise from left, snake plant, peace lily, and Chinese evergreen.

Healthful Houseplants

At home and in public spaces, plants enhance mental, physical, and social health. As people spend less time outdoors breathing fresh air, indoor plants counteract the negative effects of the pattern by boosting oxygen and moderating humidity to more natural levels. People who work with or near plants and flowers have lower blood pressure, less stress, reduced depression, and an increased sense of well-being. Scientific research bears out these and other benefits of sharing indoor spaces with plants.

The Environmental Protection Agency ranks indoor air pollution as one of the top threats to health. In our increasingly energy-efficient houses and office buildings, there exists an unhealthy lack of fresh air and a preponderance of pollutants. Synthetic furnishings and building materials that release toxic chemicals add to the problem. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that form toxic vapors at room temperature are commonly found in plastics, cleaning products, and other household chemicals.

Research by NASA has proved that an array of houseplants reduce indoor pollutants by filtering them as well as particulate matter from the air. The NASA study suggests that as few as 15 houseplants can reduce the pollutants in an average home. All it takes is one potted plant per 100 square feet to clean the air in an average size house or office.

Generally, plants with large leaves have higher rates of transpiration and an increased ability to reduce toxins. Gerbera daisies and mums top the list of flowering plants most effective as air filters.

Nature's Air Filters

Houseplants add more than a welcome touch of greenery to homes and offices—they also reduce common indoor air pollutants. The following include some of the air-cleaning plants and chemicals they filter most effectively.



Boston fern
Nephrolepsis exaltata is especially efficient at removing formaldehyde (in carpet, fiberboard, and foam insulation) and adding humidity to the indoor environment.



Chinese evergreen
Aglaonema commutatum has shown in research that it is particularly effective in filtering benzene (found in glue, spot remover, paint, varnish, and paint stripper).



Dracena
Dracaena deremensis 'Janet Craig' and 'Warneckii', *D. fragrans* (corn plant, *above*) and *D. marginata* (Madagascar dragon tree) filter trichloroethylene from paint, varnish, and adhesive.



English ivy
Hedera helix also has proved effective at absorbing benzene (sources include cigarette smoke and car exhaust) and formaldehyde (commonly found in building materials).



Palm
Effective at removing most indoor air pollutants, varieties include areca palm (*Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*), bamboo palm (*Chamaedorea erumpens*), and lady palm (*Rhapis excelsa*).



Peace lily
Spathiphyllum wallisii is adept at absorbing benzene and trichloroethylene.



Pothos
Epipremnum, especially golden pothos, ranks high for removing formaldehyde.



Snake plant
Sansevieria trifasciata 'Laurentii' is one of the best plant filters of benzene, formaldehyde, trichloroethylene, xylene, and toluene.



Spider plant
A single *Chlorophytum comosum* in an enclosed chamber filled with formaldehyde removed 85 percent of the pollutant in a day in the NASA study.



Weeping fig
Ficus benjamina works especially well at absorbing formaldehyde, toluene, and ammonia from indoor air.

Outside Inside

ENJOY FAVORITE PLANTS ON THE DECK OR PATIO IN SUMMER AND BEFORE THE WEATHER TURNS CHILLY, EXTEND THE PLEASURE BY TURNING THEM INTO HOUSEPLANTS.

WRITERS: KATE CARTER FREDERICK AND JUSTIN W. HANCOCK
PHOTOGRAPHER: PETE KRUMHARDT

Many gardeners know the sad feeling that comes with autumn frosts. The end of the season does not have to mean a painful parting with plants, however. You can move many container annuals and tropicals inside, where they'll live on as houseplants until spring.

Before you bring plants in, be sure you have the right location for them. Most will need a bright spot (if they grew in full sun outdoors). They will also like extra moisture in the air; indoor air is typically dry, and leaves turn brown when humidity is inadequate. Indoors, most plants prefer cool conditions—60s°F during the day and 10 degrees lower at night—but some will tolerate warmer temperatures.

Before lugging plants indoors, give each plant, including the tops and undersides of foliage, a shower with a strong blast from the garden hose. Bring in a few plants at a time, giving each one careful attention. Inspect and groom all plants to minimize any chance of bringing pests and diseases in with them. If a plant is infested, spray with Safer Soap and isolate it from other plants for a week or two.



Variegated calamondin, sago palm, and weeping fig are among plants that have been moved into a sunroom, where they'll spend the winter before returning to the patio next season.



Snake plant and succulents



Above: A pot mover eases the task of transporting heavy plants.



Fern, mandevilla vine, agave, and bougainvillea

Help plants adjust to the lower light conditions indoors by placing them in a shaded spot for a couple of weeks before moving them into the house. Large plants will benefit from pruning 10 to 25 percent to control their size and encourage new growth that will be better adapted to life indoors.

If you want to bring in a plant that was growing in the ground, you will need to pot it first. Choose a container with drainage holes and fill the bottom 2 or 3 inches with potting mix. Use a garden fork to gently dislodge the plant and lift it from the ground. Deter any insect pests that might be living in the garden soil by rinsing the roots with a garden hose. Transfer the plant to the pot and add potting mix around the roots and up to the level at which the plant was growing in the ground.

Once your plants have been moved indoors, water them enough so they do not completely dry out, but remember that they will not need as much water as during the growing season; nor will they need fertilizer. Think of their indoor time as a rest period.

In late spring or early summer, when nighttime temperatures are warm enough, take the plants back outdoors. Shelter plants the first couple of weeks from wind and brighter light. Check roots and repot plants that are ready for slightly larger pots. Give them fresh potting mix and fertilizer to support new growth.

Just as some of your garden plants transitioned to life as houseplants, tough houseplants enjoy a respite outdoors in summer. Outdoors, the plants thrive with filtered light, increased air circulation, and refreshing rain showers. Their health and appearance improve as their energy recharges, so you might notice lusher foliage, more saturated color, vigorous growth, and profuse flowering.

The end of the growing season does not have to mean a painful parting with plants.

Bougainvillea

Outside-Inside Plants

Before bringing plants in, check for pests and treat appropriately. Trim plants to make them more manageable indoors. Use a drip tray to keep excess water from making a mess on your floor. Setting containers on casters makes moving plants a breeze. These popular plants can easily be moved in and out. Unless you have bright conditions, some won't flower indoors, but their foliage alone makes them nice houseplants.

Aloe
This low-maintenance succulent has spiky blue-green leaves. It needs water only occasionally.



Jasmine
The small white flowers of jasmine varieties fill indoor air with their delightful perfume.



Bougainvillea
The colorful bracts (more leaf than flower) of bougainvillea appear in hues of pink, orange, or purple.



Fern
Ferns like humidity, so grow them in a moist environment such as a well-lit bathroom.





Branching Out

WHY WAIT FOR SPRING WHEN YOU CAN SNIP BRANCHES OF SOME FLOWERING SHRUBS AND TREES AND BRING THEM INTO BLOOM INDOORS?

PHOTOGRAPHERS: **MARTY BALDWIN, KIM CORNELISON, PETE KRUMHARDT,** AND **ANDY LYONS**



Opposite: Flowering quince is native to China and Japan. Left: If you cannot wait for spring, force the double blossoms of a cherry tree indoors. It's an easy way to chase away the winter blues. Below: This arrangement of pink-and-white flowering dogwood branches and white tulips looks charming in a small retro watering can. The casual floral design contrasts with the container's clean geometrical lines.



Think of them as magic wands.

Forced into bloom indoors, early-flowering branches usher the sweet breath of spring into a winter-weary home. Reap extra rewards by repurposing late-winter prunings in indoor arrangements. With their linear architecture, branches almost arrange themselves in containers large enough to provide balance.

Late January through March is the perfect time to start gathering branches for early forcing (trees and shrubs need at least eight weeks of temperatures below 40°F before they can be cut). Once their cold-weather requirements have been satisfied for the season, the branches are ready. Most branches of flowering shrubs are easy to force; those of trees can be more difficult. Remember, the later in the winter you harvest, the shorter the forcing time becomes.

Select healthy young branches with lots of plump flower buds (flower buds are typically larger than foliar buds). Choose branches from crowded sections of the plant, as you will be removing some of the plant's natural spring display. When cutting cherry or apple branches, select those that have many spurs (the short compact side shoots that eventually bear the blossoms). Cut about ¼ inch above a side bud or branch, and make sure the branches are 6 to 18 inches long.

Prime candidates for forcing include apple, cherry, quince, forsythia, spicebush, huckleberry, pussy willow, and dogwood. And remember to be patient. When the buds are swollen, move your arrangement to a sunny windowsill to better witness their unfurling splendor.



For a beguiling arrangement, tuck branches of soft-pink crabapple blossoms into vintage aqua jars. Compose the display in a spare setting, such as in front of a mirror or against a white wall to highlight the architecture of the delicate branches.


1


2


3

How to Force Branches

Step 1
After bringing branches (forsythia, *above*) indoors, cut into the bottom ends to help the cuttings draw up water. Place the branches in an upright container of water and place in a cool location. Keep the water level at its original height.

Step 2
After 1 to 6 weeks, the buds will begin to swell and show color. At this stage, they can be placed in arrangements. Trim away any buds or side branches that will sit in the water so they don't promote bacterial growth.

Step 3
If you haven't already arranged your branches in decorative, water-filled bottles or vases, do so now. To give an arrangement a full, natural shape, insert the tallest branch first, then work in the shorter ones. Freshen the water every few days.


1


2


3


5


4

The Best Landscape Shrubs and Trees for Forcing

Common name & genus		At maturity	Exposure	Bloom & season	Cut for forcing	Time until bloom
Serviceberry *Amelanchier* spp.	Zones 4–8	20–30 feet tall × 15 feet wide	Full sun	White flowers in early to midspring	February	1–4 weeks
Eastern redbud *Cercis canadensis*	Zones 4–9	30 feet tall × 20 feet wide	Full sun to light shade	Pink flowers in mid- to late spring	Early March	2–3 weeks
Flowering quince *Chaenomeles* spp.	Zones 4–10	6–12 feet tall × 6–12 feet wide	Full sun	Pink, red, orange, coral, or white flowers in midspring	Mid-February	4 weeks
Flowering dogwood *Cornus florida*	Zones 4–9	15–40 feet tall × 15–30 feet wide	Full sun to part shade	Creamy yellow, white, or pink flowers in mid- to late spring	Mid-March	2 weeks
Cornelian cherry dogwood *Cornus mas*	Zones 4–8	20–25 feet tall × 20–25 feet wide	Full sun to part shade	Yellow flowers in early spring	January	2 weeks
Forsythia *Forsythia* spp.	Zones 5–8	8–10 feet tall × 10–12 feet wide	Full sun to light shade	Golden yellow flowers in early to midspring	Mid-January	1–3 weeks
Fothergilla *Fothergilla* spp.	Zones 5–8	2–10 feet tall × 2–10 feet wide	Full sun to part shade	White blooms in mid- to late spring	March	2–3 weeks
Vernal witch hazel *Hamamelis vernalis*	Zones 4–8	10 feet tall × 10 feet wide	Full sun to part shade	Red or yellow flowers in late January–March	January	1 week
Apple, crabapple *Malus* spp.	Zones 4–8	20 feet tall × 20 feet wide	Full sun	White to pink flowers in spring	February to mid-March	2–5 weeks
Flowering plum, cherry *Prunus* spp.	Zones 5–8	25 feet tall × 25 feet wide	Full sun	White or pink single or double flowers in midspring	Early February	2–5 weeks

Opposite: 1. Forsythia are among the easiest to force and the earliest-flowering branches that can be brought indoors in winter. 2. Excellent candidates for forcing indoors include single-petal cherry blossoms as well as their cousins peach, plum, and apple. 3. The delicate double blossoms of pink flowering almond (*Prunus glandulosa*) resemble tiny tissue-paperlike roses. 4. Fothergilla (*F.* × *intermedia*) boasts spectacular bottlebrushlike blossoms. 5. Masses of pink flowers grace a crabapple tree (*Malus* × *arnoldiana*) in midspring.



Rooms in Bloom

PLANTS ADD PERSONALITY TO A HOME OR OFFICE, DRESSING UP SPACES WITH THEIR NATURAL DECORATIVE QUALITIES.

Design Basics

If you choose plants and containers that appeal to you aesthetically, the result is often more a work of art than an act of nature. Plants work as decorative accessories, like your favorite art or vintage pieces, to brighten bare walls or dull corners with forms, textures, and colors. Begin by looking at the big picture—the entire room—then focus on details. A plant's outline or overall shape creates a strong initial impression. If you choose plants with varied shapes and sizes of leaves and flowers, you'll create interest within a room. Contrast forms, such as a vertical *Sansevieria* with a mounding peperomia, to create drama and excitement.

Plants bring rooms to life. Use their colors to create a more welcoming and comforting room, playing with warm, exciting reds or cool, calming blues. Purple grabs attention; yellow and pink convey optimism. Soul-soothing green is the primary color of indoor plants, and you'll find many hues of green as well as seemingly endless variegations (green marked with a pattern of white, gray, silver, yellow, red, pink, or purple). Foliage plants may form the backbone of an indoor garden, with variegated leaves adding splashes of color, but flowering plants make an indoor garden spectacular. Concentrate on the interplay between one or two colors when combining plants in a display.

Experiment to group plants effectively. When combining plants in one accommodating container, choose varieties that need the same cultural care. Select one plant—usually a larger one—to anchor the group; let smaller and trailing plants reside at the perimeter. When grouping single plants in individual containers, consider how they will be viewed from one or more locations.

Opposite: An array of plants enhances the casual, relaxed vibe in a comfortable sunroom. Designed for year-round enjoyment and retrofitted with high-efficiency insulated windows, the room provides a perfect place for plants and people to hang out.



Grouping plants such as these orchids gives them a stronger presence. Small pots fit easily on gravel-filled trays. A mirror reflects the colorful display.



Gather bottles old and new on a windowsill where they will catch light; play with soothing blue and green. Add water and cuttings of coleus or other favorites.



Potted individually in vintage containers that add style and cohesion, herbs and tulips mingle in a pretty windowsill garden.



Wherever you display plants—whether it's one or many—attention will be drawn there. Succulents in diverse containers create artful accents rich in texture.

Expressing Your Style

The decorating scheme of any home is a unique and personal expression. Use plant selections as finishing touches that make your stylistic statement, complementing the design style of the setting as well as the furniture. Plants can enhance a room's architecture. If you have a large open room with a vaulted ceiling, place a 5-foot-tall ficus on a pedestal to give the illusion of a large plant that won't overwhelm the space. Other architectural features that call for plants include an alcove, ledge, fireplace mantel, bookcase, and windowsill. Tropical plants, including palms and other houseplants, grace indoor rooms with their forms. Trailing and climbing plants can create a verdant curtain, room divider, or living wall.

Ultimately the selection and placement of plants depend on what appeals to you and makes a positive addition to your home. Any arrangement that includes plants and other objects can be balanced either formally or informally. Using two single potted plants to flank a feature, such as a fireplace or doorway, has a formal effect. Topiaries, tree-form plants, and upright cacti work well in formal schemes. Informal designs are asymmetrical and freely balance the shapes, colors, and other design qualities of an odd number of plants.

TRADITIONAL
With attention to bold and graceful lines, this style balances formal elements with livability. The plant brings lively charm to the setting.

Plant possibilities:
Topiary, *below;* fern; peace lily



MINIMALIST
This contemporary style simplifies with its Zenlike focus of less clutter, essential beauty, elegance, calm, and low maintenance.

Plant possibilities:
Snake plant, *below;* aloe; *Tillandsia*



URBAN
Loft or condo living calls for the personal flair of bold colors, strong patterns, and lush greenery—even edibles such as wheatgrass.

Plant possibilities:
Wheatgrass, *below;* coleus; croton





REGIONAL
The surroundings (desert here) provide cues for decorating with native plants, wood, local stone, and a fitting color palette. The forms and textures of succulents and cacti create living art.

Plant possibilities:
Prickly pear, *above;* citrus; ornamental chili



MODERN
A typically sparse, architectural setting with sleek lines uses a single plant as living sculpture with striking effect. Green plants with geometric shapes suit a neutral modern vibe.

Plant possibilities:
Kentia palm, *above;* agave; umbrella plant



CASUAL
Call it cottage, country, or garden style, a plant collection helps implement comfortable-yet-chic decorating with other natural elements.

Plant possibilities:
Orchid, *above;* bromeliad; moss



If an entryway has a window, there will be enough light to keep herbs going for a few months. Trading them for seasonal bloomers keeps the display fresh.

Room for Plants

Improving the appearance of a room by incorporating plants can be thought of as interior landscaping or plantscaping. Each room in a home has a different function, and its uses combined with the growing conditions determine which plants could do well in any given room. Growing conditions also vary within a room depending on location of windows, doors, and air vents.

Be aware of the common pitfalls in various rooms and take steps to help plants overcome the challenges of their location. Areas near doorways are subject to blasts of cold air that can devastate some plants. In entryways and hallways, choose hardy plants that fit the space. Plants should not obstruct stairs or doorways. Wherever you place plants, ensure they can be easily watered, and place an impermeable barrier under any container to protect surfaces from moisture and scratches. Plants should enhance the setting rather than add clutter.

OFFICE
In a home office or other spare room where there are multiple windows and ample light, most plants will be content.

Plant possibilities:
Orchid, *below;* scented geranium; Swedish ivy



ENTRYWAY
Colorful, pretty plants create a positive first impression and help people feel at home. A window enhances the usually dim light.

Plant possibilities:
Ivy, *below;* Chinese evergreen; *Cordyline*



KITCHEN
Typically a good place for plants, a kitchen offers easy access to water and higher humidity than other rooms. If there's a window, you're in luck.

Plant possibilities:
Sedum, *below;* culinary herbs; lettuce





DINING ROOM
Floor plants and living centerpieces are ideal touches. Select short tabletop plants so they don't interrupt eye contact. Heavily scented plants might compete with food aromas.

Plant possibilities:
Begonia, *above;* oxalis; peperomia



BATHROOM
Take advantage of the higher humidity near a sink, tub, or shower and add a showy plant where space allows.

Plant possibilities:
Orchid, *above;* bromeliad; fern



LIVING ROOM
The light is typically a good medium level in this east-facing window, and there's room to group plants with ornamental objects and furniture.

Plant possibilities:
Dracena, *above; Calathea;* fern



Displaying herbs, ivy, and wheatgrass at different levels makes a room more inviting and interesting. Place plants away from foot traffic for safety.



Left: Place an architectural plant, such as *Ficus lyrata,* where its silhouette will stand out against a wall, and it can live happily indoors for years. **Below:** Pots of blooming *Kalanchoe* form a contrasting skirt at the base of a tall cactus. Christmas cactus or small poinsettias also would work well.



Strategic Effects

When deciding where and how to situate plants in your home, the amount of available space may be the determining factor. If you have an area you want to accentuate, or a bare and boring place, start there to decorate with plants. On a windowsill or coffee table, shelf or pedestal, strategically placed plants can camouflage less-than-desirable views or partition a large room into inviting areas for different uses. If a room has an unused area that's too small to accommodate a functional piece of furniture or too large to be ignored, put plants to work there. If space is limited, place plants where they will add color and character without competing for sitting room. Use a small stool to raise a pot off the floor or a table, moving it closer to needed light yet out of the way of traffic.

Windowsills are among the most natural perches for indoor plants due to the optimal light conditions. Choose small potted plants that will stand stable on a sill or mount a deeper shelf on a window frame to hold bigger pots. Vining and trailing plants work well in hanging planters. Suspend them to screen or frame the view outdoors.

Any plant that is low growing and interesting when viewed from above makes a good tabletop plant. Group a few small plants for an intriguing tabletop display or start with a single spectacular plant. When a plant outgrows a tabletop, move it to a bookcase or other shelf where it might cascade or best show off its maturing form.

Keep scale and proportion of rooms and plants in mind as you create attractive focal points. Big or tall plants have the most distinctive effect when placed on the floor away from other plants and furniture. Regard them as furniture or sculpture with a physical presence that should add style, beauty, and even function—not just take up space. Small plants draw attention to their diminutive stature. Group a few small potted plants on a tray or in a dish, terrarium, or other eye-catching container for starters, and situate them in a place where they're certain to get a closer look. Lining up a few ivies in silver pots on a mantel or gathering several orchids in a flat basket on a side table will have more impact than scattering single potted plants around the room.



A south-facing window provides the direct light that herbs and other plants need to thrive indoors throughout the winter. Without enough light, plants might stretch toward the window and become lanky.

Ideal Environment

The best place for any plant in any home is where it will receive the light it needs to survive and thrive. Placing plants where they contribute to the decor is only part of a gardener's task in making a successful indoor garden. If you have any doubt about a spot's suitability for a particular plant, experiment! Just be aware that the plant may not thrive. A more dependable approach starts with knowledge about each plant's environmental needs for light, humidity, temperature, and air circulation. Match plants to comparable conditions in your home and adjust the conditions as needed.

Just as plants' needs for light and water change with the seasons, the conditions in your home will vary, too, from month to month, room to room, and within some rooms. Your home has microclimates where windows, vents, and other features affect the environment, making it warmer or cooler and more or less humid. You can use these microclimates to benefit plants. For instance, north windows keep a room cool during the winter and make a perfect place for plants that rest between late fall and early spring. Plants native to arid climates will like living near a heat vent; plants that hail from the tropics appreciate the high humidity of a bathroom or kitchen. Placing a plant on a mantel or other spot near a fireplace may appear pleasing to the eye, but remember to move the plant away from the area when you have a fire to prevent scorching it.

Left: Sheer curtains diffuse the bright light directly in front of a south-facing window, making it ideal for ferns as well as African violets and begonias. Below: Warmth and lots of bright light are crucial for the success of herbs, including rosemary, sage, thyme, parsley, and chives.



Light Conditions

The amount of light available to a plant indoors is critical to its health. The classifications of low, medium, and bright natural light provide guidelines for siting plants.

BRIGHT LIGHT
Plants receive four or more hours of high or bright light in an unobstructed window that faces south or southwest.

Plant possibilities:
Cactus
Citrus
Croton
Flowering maple
Hibiscus
Jade
Orchid
Purple passion
Succulents

MEDIUM LIGHT
In an east or west window, this site receives a few hours of early-morning or late-afternoon sun daily.

Plant possibilities:
African violet
Begonia
English ivy
Ferns
Fig
Jasmine
Nerve plant
Peperomia
Schefflera
Spider plant

LOW LIGHT
In a place away from a north-, east-, or northeast-facing window, plants get some light but not direct sun.

Plant possibilities:
Cast-iron plant
Chinese evergreen
Dieffenbachia
Dracena
Lady palm
Parlor palm
Peace lily
Philodendron
Pothos
Sansevieria

If you have any doubt about a spot's suitability for a particular plant, experiment!

Forcing Bulbs

SPRING-FLOWERING BULBS, INCLUDING HYACINTHS AND PAPERWHITE NARCISSUS, CAN BE TRICKED INTO FLOWERING INDOORS DURING WINTER—MAKE IT YOUR NEW FUN, ANNUAL RITUAL.

WRITER AND PRODUCER: **KATE CARTER FREDERICK**
PHOTOGRAPHERS: **JASON DONNELLY** AND **DEAN SCHOEPPNER**



Paperwhite narcissus bulbs require no special treatment in order to sprout and grow indoors in pots full of gravel and a bit of water.

Breath of Spring

Slender canning jars fit a windowsill garden. Each one holds a hyacinth bulb inside a tepee of flowering branches. Stand a half-dozen forsythia and pussy willow branches in each jar and tie the branch tops with a bit of raffia to form a tepee. Add enough water to each jar to sustain the bulb and the branches.

Force bulbs en masse in a small bucket or similar container and move them into displays when the green leaf tips have emerged. For this display, each bulb was lifted from the forcing container and roots trimmed to fit into the jar. Trim no more than 1/3 of the roots.

Materials

Quilted-glass jelly jars

Spring-flowering branches

Hyacinth bulbs

Raffia



Seeing Clearly Now

Set up a perfect home for hyacinths in minutes. Place several inches of colorful marbles in the bottom of a clear glass pillar and add an inch or two of water to just below the marbles' surface—voilà! The container supports the top-heavy flowers and keeps them upright as they bloom. The marbles allow room for root development while suspending the bulbs above the water.

Materials

5×12-inch glass vase

Glass marbles

4 or 5 hyacinth bulbs



Center of Attention

A vintage glass punch bowl makes a light-catching centerpiece, especially when brimming with glass pieces. Hyacinth bulbs snuggle in a bed of clear recycled glass and white garden rock that mimic ice and snow. Tempered glass pieces are sometimes free for the asking at windshield repair shops.

Materials

14-inch-diameter glass bowl

6 cups recycled glass

4 cups glass stones

6 cups white garden rock

9 to 12 hyacinth bulbs



Below left: Forced hyacinths and other bulbs potted in soil can be enjoyed indoors in colorful pots or outdoors in the garden. **Below right:** The traditional means of forcing prechilled hyacinth bulbs entails suspending bulbs on the surface of water in shapely glass vases. Hyacinth bulbs bloom about eight weeks after chilling.


Forcing in soil


Forcing in water





Prechilling and Forcing Hyacinth Bulbs

Buy prechilled hyacinth bulbs at a garden retail outlet or prechill them as well as other hardy, spring-flowering bulbs, such as *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-Tête', grape hyacinths, *Fritillaria*, and crocuses. Hardy bulbs can be forced into bloom only once. After that, commit the bulbs to compost or plant them outdoors with a handful of bulb food in late spring and let the foliage wither naturally. Follow these steps:

Choose good bulbs

Purchase bulbs from a garden center or mail-order source. Choose plump, firm bulbs. Hyacinth blooms are intensely fragrant; other flowering bulbs, such as some daffodils and grape hyacinths, are not.

Chill out

Place your bulbs in a paper bag. Count ahead 12 to 14 weeks on a calendar and write that date and the type of bulb on the bag. Research other types of bulbs online to determine their chilling time. Store the bag of bulbs in the refrigerator away from apples or other fruits, which produce a gas that can cause the bulbs to rot. After 12 to 14 weeks of chilling, it's time to trick your hyacinth bulbs into behaving as if spring has come. Your bulbs will most likely develop roots and bloom in about eight more weeks.

How to plant

Plant your bulbs in a pot of soil, nestling them together. Cover the bulbs at least half way from their bottoms, leaving their tips poking out of the soil. Or force a bulb in water by placing it in a shapely vase that supports the base of the bulb and adding water until it barely reaches the bottom of the bulb. Force multiple bulbs in a watertight container that holds 3 inches of gravel and an inch or two of water. Avoid immersing the bulbs in water because they will rot. Add a tablespoon of activated charcoal to help keep the water fresh longer.

Transition time

Place the pot, vase, or watertight container in a cool room out of direct sunlight. After several weeks, the bulbs will begin to show signs of growth that resemble little green noses. Add water as needed only to dampen the soil or reach the developing roots.

Ready to flower

Move the pot, vase, or other container into a warmer room with more light. Within a few more weeks, your bulbs will be ready for gentle transplanting into pretty arrangements. To use potted bulbs in arrangements, unpot them and gently tug their roots apart. Rinse any soil off of the roots.



Hyacinth ‘Fondant’



Paperwhite narcissus bulbs require neither soil nor prechilling for forcing.

Paperwhite narcissus



Above: Plant paperwhites in a waterproof container, such as a ceramic dish, which is nonporous and without drainage holes. These tender bulbs cannot survive freezing winter conditions outdoors and will bloom only once. Enjoy their blooms indoors, then let the spent bulbs go to the compost pile.

Read more about forced bulbs in the *Amazing Amaryllis* story on page 58.





How to Force Paperwhite Narcissus

Paperwhite narcissus bulbs require neither soil nor prechilling for forcing. Start bulbs anytime from early fall to midwinter for blooming within three to six weeks. Use a container that holds a single bulb or a handful. Plant paperwhites in a potting medium of pebbles, glass marbles, sand or potting mix. Multiple containers grown at intervals create an ongoing display of intensely scented flowers.

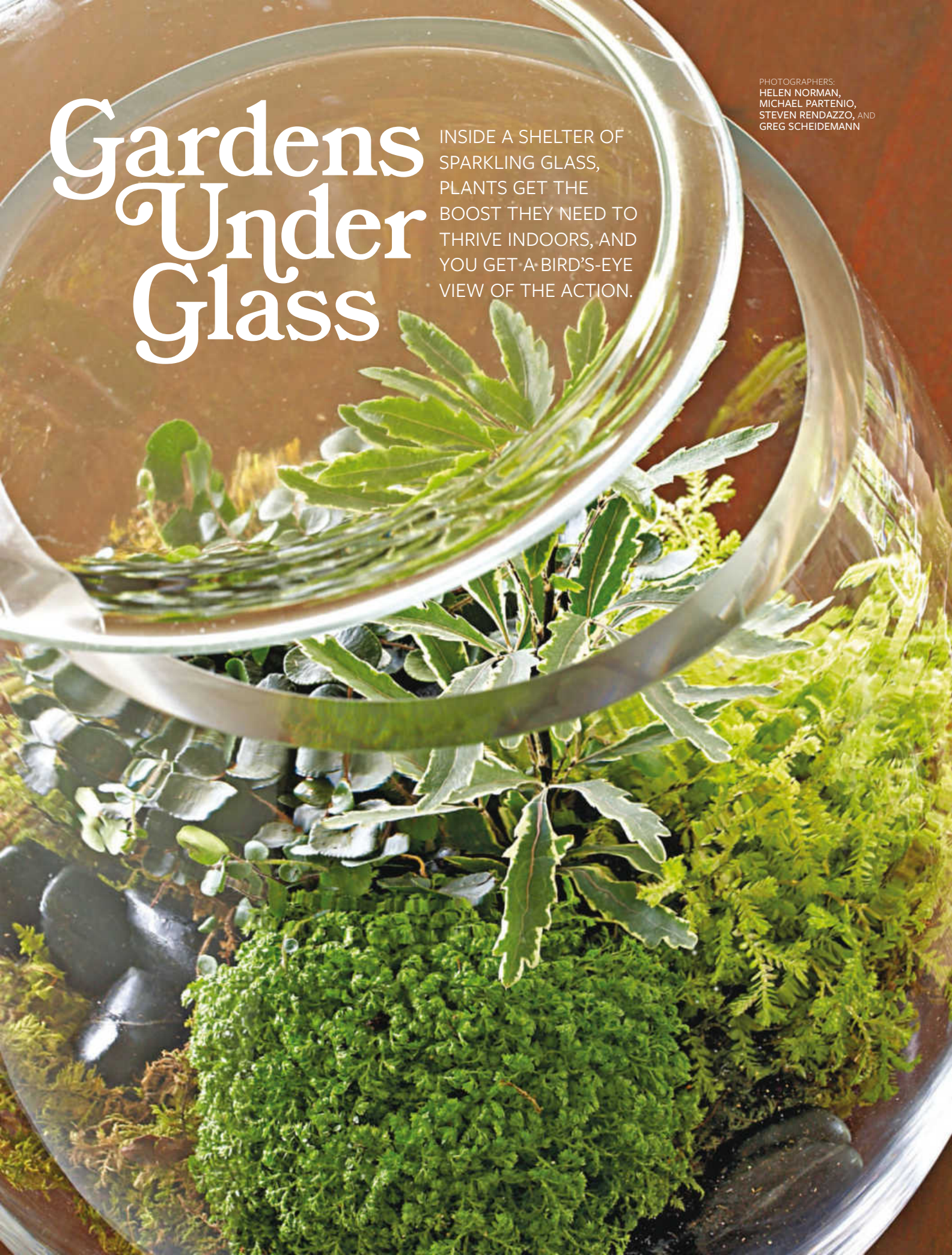
Step 1
Cover the bottom of a watertight container with gravel 2-3 inches deep. Substitute potting mix for gravel if desired. Snuggle the narcissus bulb bases into the pebbles with their pointed ends facing up.

Step 2
Cover the bulbs up to their necks with pebbles. The tips of the bulbs should remain above the gravel. Add enough water to reach the bottoms of the bulbs—about 1 inch deep in gravel or until the potting mix is moistened. To maximize blooms, set the container in a cool (40°F to 60°F) place with bright light.

Gardens Under Glass

INSIDE A SHELTER OF SPARKLING GLASS, PLANTS GET THE BOOST THEY NEED TO THRIVE INDOORS, AND YOU GET A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE ACTION.

PHOTOGRAPHERS:
HELEN NORMAN,
MICHAEL PARTENIO,
STEVEN RENDAZZO, AND
GREG SCHEIDEMANN





Terrariums

A terrarium defies many of the typical challenges of gardening. The miniature garden encased in glass rarely sprouts a weed. The need for supplemental watering is reduced by condensation forming water droplets that dribble back down to the soil and recycle moisture. The portable container allows you to move the garden into bright-but-indirect light in one room or another.

Magic under glass

A terrarium can be full of surprises, holding a collection of small, compatible plants that like low light and high humidity, lichen-covered branches, or exquisite orchids. Children are drawn to terrariums as miniature worlds where they can learn about gardening with a few plants in an old aquarium or a goldfish bowl. The most easy-care terrariums hold potted plants, making it a breeze to change the display whenever you want.

The container you choose helps give a terrarium its appeal, from the sparkle of a giant clear-glass globe to the shapely charm of a lidded apothecary jar. A terrarium that's open at the top allows air to flow freely; an enclosed terrarium needs just a little watering and regular opening to allow ventilation. Scour crafts stores, flea markets, and garage sales for containers, whether you prefer an oversize brandy snifter or a pickle jar. Choose a vessel you can fit your hand into to ease planting and maintenance. Always start with a clean container.

Planting a terrarium

Your terrarium might include a few carnivorous plants or dwarf and slow-growing houseplants that will appreciate the low light and high humidity inside it. Plants with bold-color foliage are easiest to see inside the glass and contrast with other plants. Start with various-size plants for a grouping. Succulents, cacti, and other plants that like dry conditions rot rapidly in a closed or moist terrarium, so plant them in an open glass container and sterile sand layered with pebbles instead.

Make an ideal potting mix for a terrarium by blending two parts peat-based potting mix, one part sterile sand, and one part perlite or vermiculite. After planting, top the soil mix with moss, gravel, or sand for a decorative effect.

Keep it growing

Lightly dampen the soil after planting, sprinkling water until it drips into the pebbles. Water an open terrarium when the soil appears dry—every 7 to 10 days. A closed terrarium needs watering every two weeks or less. Periodically wipe the glass inside and out with a clean cloth.

Opposite: Create a terrarium using everyday objects, such as a large clear-glass vase and a plate. If condensation clouds the glass of your terrarium, open the lid or remove the stopper to increase ventilation. **Above:** Ordinary containers, such as carafes and vases, make ideal terrariums. These showcase (from left) miniature *Guzmania,* a bromeliad; maidenhair fern and *Selaginella;* and a mix of *Selaginella,* button fern, and variegated false aralia.



Opposite: It's a jungle in here. A glass cloche creates a snug, self-sustaining environment for a fern, strawberry begonia, *Pilea,* and sheet moss. Right: Choose a clear-glass container over colored glass, which filters out some wavelengths of light needed by plants to stay healthy.

How to Make a Terrarium



Step 1
Place glass beads about 1 to 2 inches deep in the bottom of a clear-glass container. Use pebbles or aquarium gravel instead of glass beads if you prefer.



Step 2
Add a handful of horticultural charcoal chips. Then add a layer of potting mix 2 to 4 inches deep, depending on the size of your container.



Step 3
Gently place each plant, tucking the root balls into the soil mix and covering them. Work slowly and patiently to position the plants.



Step 4
A makeshift long-handled tool helps reach into a narrow-neck jar to nestle root balls into the soil mix, cover roots, and position other elements, such as stones or driftwood.





The fronds of mother fern (*Asplenium viviparum*) arch over low-growing mosaic plant (*Fittonia verschaffeltii*), earth star (*Cryptanthus bivittatus*), and *Pilea* 'Aquamarine'.

A wooden orb serves as a decorative stopper in the top of this blown-glass jar, mimicking a rain forest ecosystem for its inhabitants, two humidity loving earth stars.


This dancing lady orchid (*Oncidium Sunlight* 'Hilo Honey') flirts with fresh air above the open embrace of a glass cylinder vase.
All this air plant (*Tillandsia*) needs to thrive in its dangling recycled-glass bauble is a dip in water every two weeks.
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Tabletop Conservatories

Miniature conservatories, also known as Wardian cases, have been favorites of gardeners since Victorian times. The fanciful glass enclosures are downsized versions of the elegant greenhouses and conservatories often photographed in English gardens. The full-size glass and metal or wood structures remain fantasies for most gardeners. But miniature conservatories offer a reasonable alternative for those with fewer resources. All it takes to make one of these gardens under glass is a conservatory and a few humidity loving plants, such as fern, dracena, and polka-dot plant.

The Wardian case

These charming enclosures for indoor gardens were developed in the early 1800s by a London doctor, Nathaniel Ward, who wanted to watch a sphinx moth chrysalis develop in a closed jar. The man was so enthralled with his project's success, he began growing plants of all sorts in glass enclosures. Before long, the plant hunters of that time, roaming the planet in search of exotic new treasures, depended on Wardian cases as a way to transport their finds with minimal watering and attention.

Today, miniature conservatories have staged a comeback with the resurgence of indoor gardening and the renewed popularity of terrariums. A stylish conservatory becomes a beautiful tabletop garden when filled with small, seasonally blooming annuals or bulbs. It's also an ideal nursery for young plants, especially ferns and others that thrive in the humid environment created by the structure.

Many miniature conservatories are so architecturally captivating, they're used as a handsome backdrop for a few plants or other decorative objects. Some conservatories come with a built-in tray. If it doesn't, you can plant in a deep-enough tray or set potted plants on a tray and cover them with the conservatory.

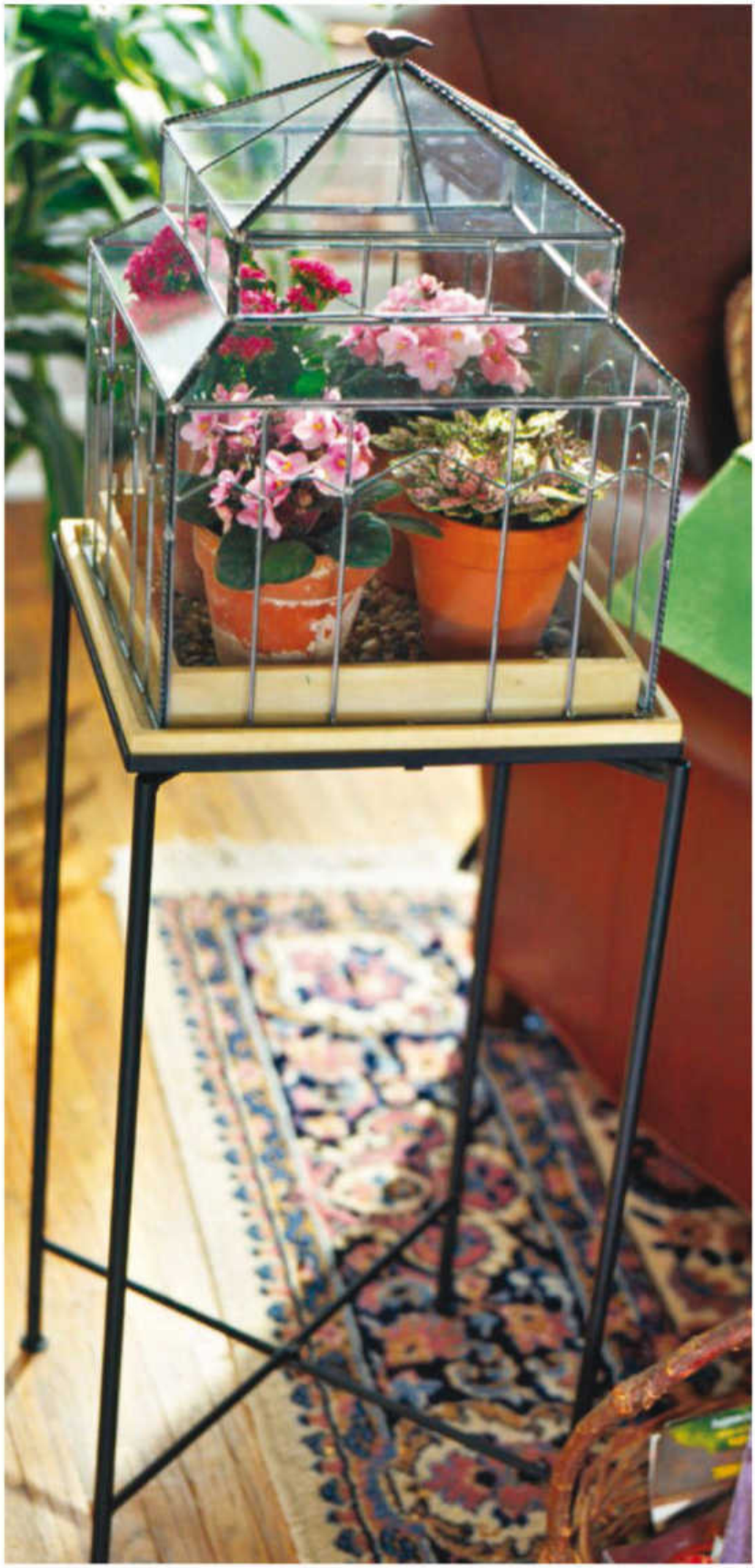




A vintage tabletop conservatory becomes a stage for a miniature woodland garden—arbor and all—of flowering Cape primrose, rabbit's-foot fern, golden club moss, black and dwarf mondograsses, variegated ivy, angel's tears, and Kenilworth ivy. If this or any similar container garden dries out, mist rather than water so as not to disturb the layers of soil.



This 15½-inch-tall Wardian case is roomy enough for several plants: maidenhair fern (*Adiantum* spp.), arrowhead vine (*Syngonium podophyllum*), artillery plant (*Pilea microphylla*), and prayer plant (*Maranta leuconeura*). Vents in the top supply fresh air to the container.





Humidity Loving Plants

These plants like a draft-free, damp environment and do well when given a home in a small conservatory.

- **African violet** (*Saintpaulia* spp.)
- **Aluminum plant** (*Pilea cadierei*)
- **Begonia rex**
- **Creeping fig** (*Ficus pumila*)
- **Earth star** (*Cryptanthus* spp.)
- **Fern**
- **Ivy**
- **Lucky bamboo** (*Dracaena sanderiana*)
- **Moss**
- **Nerve plant** (*Fittonia* spp.)
- **Orchid**
- **Peperomia**
- **Pitcher plant** (*Nepenthes* spp.)
- **Prayer plant** (*Maranta leuconeura*)
- **Strawberry begonia** (*Saxifraga stolonifera*)
- **Venus flytrap** (*Dionaea muscipula*)
- **Zebra or peacock plant** (*Calathea* spp.)

Above: A variety of colorful African violets, among other humidity loving plants, thrive in a small glass conservatory. Above right: Easy-care rabbit's-foot fern (*Davallia fejeensis*) grows in this stately Wardian case.



This miniature dome conservatory houses striped brake (*Pteris quadriaurita*) and selaginella.







How to Plant a Conservatory

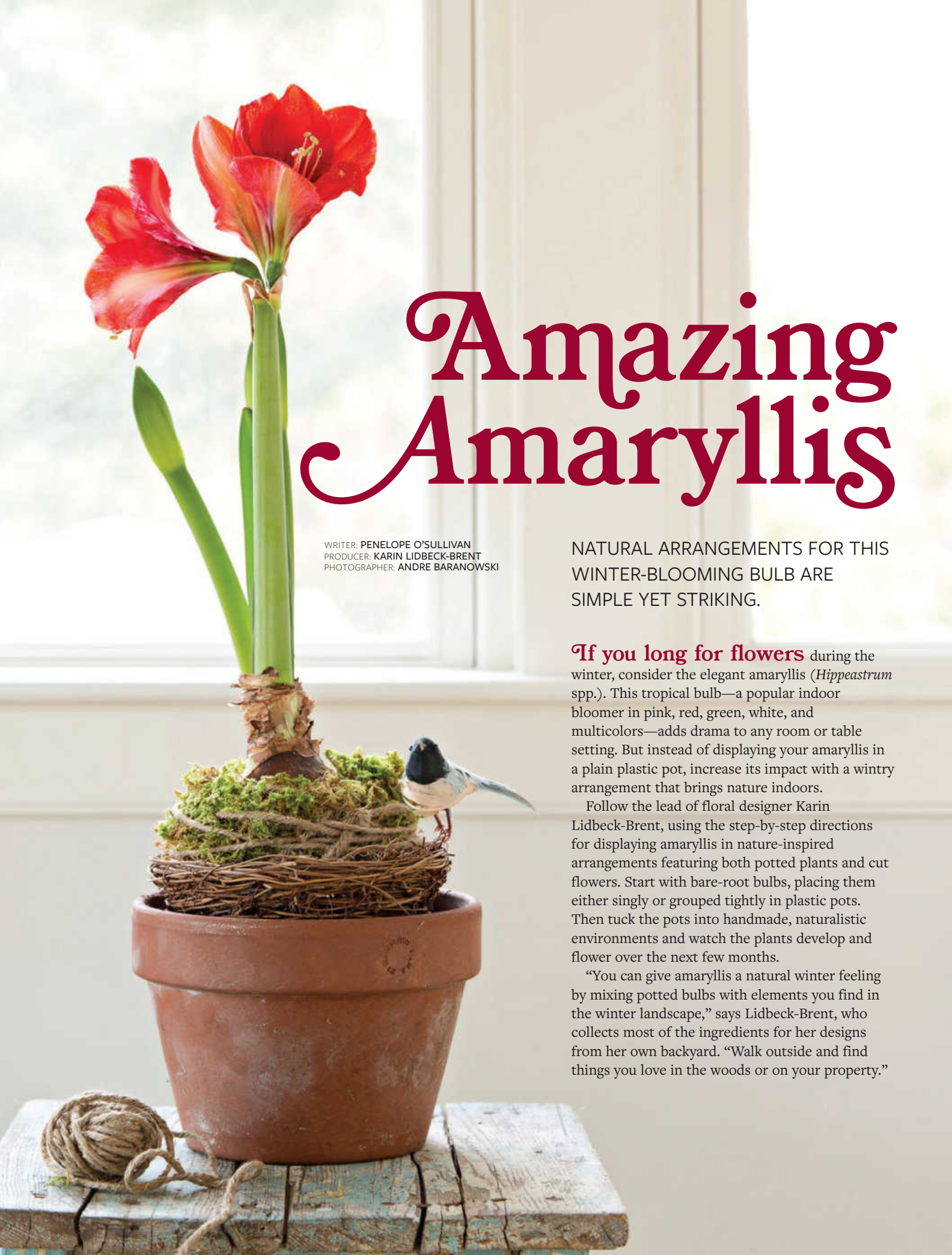
If your conservatory doesn't have a built-in tray, find one of an appropriate size to set it on. Cover the bottom of the tray with a layer of pea gravel. If the tray is at least 3 inches deep, finish filling it with potting mix for direct planting.

Set a conservatory in bright or diffused light, depending on the plants' needs, but avoid placing it in direct light to prevent overheating and scorching plants.

Maintain plants in a small conservatory by checking them periodically and watering as needed. Remove the container's top to ventilate the plants every few days and to prevent fungal or mold problems in the humid conditions.

Step 1
Plant a Wardian case with a shallow tray by placing a 1-inch layer of pea gravel in the bottom of the tray for drainage. Cover the gravel with a layer of horticultural charcoal chips, available at garden centers. Set potted plants on top of the gravel and charcoal.

Step 2
Plant a conservatory with a 3-inch-deep or deeper base by covering the bottom of the base with a 1-inch layer of gravel; sprinkle horticultural charcoal chips over the gravel. Place a piece of cheesecloth on top of the charcoal and gravel. Cover the cheesecloth with a 1-inch layer of potting mix. Set plants' root balls on the potting mix. Fill in between the root balls with additional potting mix. Gently water the plants.



Amazing Amaryllis

WRITER: PENELOPE O'SULLIVAN
PRODUCER: KARIN LIDBECK-BRENT
PHOTOGRAPHER: ANDRE BARANOWSKI

NATURAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THIS WINTER-BLOOMING BULB ARE SIMPLE YET STRIKING.

If you long for flowers during the winter, consider the elegant amaryllis (*Hippeastrum* spp.). This tropical bulb—a popular indoor bloomer in pink, red, green, white, and multicolors—adds drama to any room or table setting. But instead of displaying your amaryllis in a plain plastic pot, increase its impact with a wintry arrangement that brings nature indoors.

Follow the lead of floral designer Karin Lidbeck-Brent, using the step-by-step directions for displaying amaryllis in nature-inspired arrangements featuring both potted plants and cut flowers. Start with bare-root bulbs, placing them either singly or grouped tightly in plastic pots. Then tuck the pots into handmade, naturalistic environments and watch the plants develop and flower over the next few months.

"You can give amaryllis a natural winter feeling by mixing potted bulbs with elements you find in the winter landscape," says Lidbeck-Brent, who collects most of the ingredients for her designs from her own backyard. "Walk outside and find things you love in the woods or on your property."



Opposite: To make a whimsical bird-nest design, wrap the shoulders and sides of a 'Merry Christmas' amaryllis bulb in moss; secure with twine. Add potting mix to a terra-cotta pot until it is three-quarters full. Set the nest in the pot atop the potting mix and place a little potting soil inside the nest. Put the wrapped bulb in the nest with its roots gently tucked underneath the bulb; they will grow through the nest into the pot below. Set an artificial bird on the nest's edge. **Above:** The large, pale blooms of amaryllis 'Nymph' lend themselves to striking displays, whether planted singly or in groups. Amaryllis makes a stunning cut flower that can last 10 to 14 days. Prolong the life of the flowers by recutting stem ends every few days and replacing the vase water.



Lidbeck-Brent's amaryllis displays are striking combinations of live colorful blooms and seasonal vegetation. She digs up moss under her rhododendrons to cover the soil in some arrangements and pulls chunks of bark off a fallen branch for rugged accents.

Before planting your bulbs, choose a bloom strategy. For an extravagant show of flowers, start all of your bulbs at the same time. Or stagger plantings every two weeks, as Lidbeck-Brent does, for continuous blooms throughout winter. Once potted, Dutch amaryllis typically produce flowers in eight to 12 weeks, and South African amaryllis strains bloom in four to six weeks.

"It's amazing how fast amaryllis grow," Lidbeck-Brent says. "That's what makes this project so fun." She adds that although amaryllis can be purchased preplanted in plastic pots, "when you can make your own environment, it's even more exciting to watch them grow."



Grouping several types of amaryllis enlivens any sunny tabletop. This display includes, from far left: green-throat cybister 'Emerald'; 'Picotee', with crimson-edge white petals; red-and-white 'Splash'; 'Purple Rain' under the cloche; spider-flower cybister 'Evergreen'; budding 'Faro', which opens with a white starburst on salmon petals and a green eye; and 'Summertime'.



Create a fantastical mini landscape in a basket with moss for a groundcover, miniature houseplants from a local garden center, and dramatic striped 'Splash' amaryllis. To make this arrangement, first line a shallow round basket with plastic. Cut a drainage hole in the plastic toward the middle of the basket. Plant the bulb in a small pot and place it in the center of the basket. Fill the basket around the pot with soil. Make little holes in the soil and plant small tropical ferns and miniature plants grown for terrariums around the potted amaryllis. Cover the soil to the basket's edge with moss, leaving the amaryllis bulb exposed.





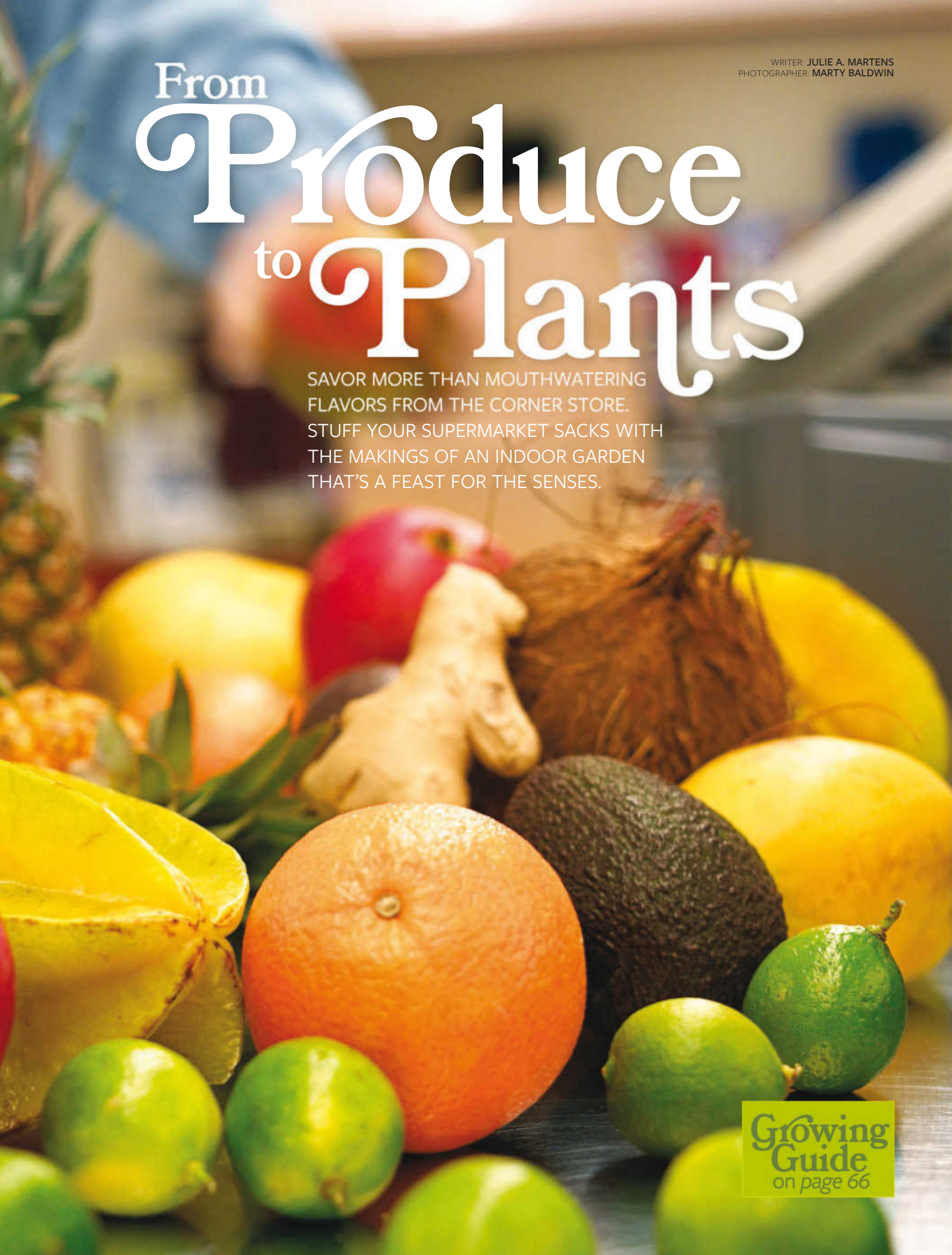


Above left: Use three bulbs of 'Apple Blossom' amaryllis in a plastic pot disguised for this earthy arrangement, which also includes bark, branches, and twine. Begin by collecting a few small branches and long, flat bark pieces from a fallen branch. Break the bark into strips taller than your pot. Piece by piece, hot-glue the strips vertically to the container, overlapping them slightly. Wrap twine several times around the container and tie it. Insert stark branches of cones into the soil for a wintry effect. **Top right:** Find a glass container with an opening wide enough at the top to fit a small or medium potted amaryllis inside. Set the pot in the container. To hold the pot in place as the flower stems grow and bloom, surround the pot with pinecones, twigs, moss, and other natural objects you've collected. Also use tall branches to support the stems of 'Emerald' amaryllis as they grow. **Above right:** Use a pot-in-bowl technique to create a balanced arrangement in scale with the tall stems and big blooms of 'Summertime' amaryllis. In a large glass bowl, place some moss at the bottom to elevate the potted amaryllis bulb so the top of the pot is roughly the same level as the bowl's rim. Cover the inside of the glass bowl with moss to hide the pot.

WRITER: JULIE A. MARTENS
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARTY BALDWIN

From Produce to Plants

SAVOR MORE THAN MOUTHWATERING FLAVORS FROM THE CORNER STORE. STUFF YOUR SUPERMARKET SACKS WITH THE MAKINGS OF AN INDOOR GARDEN THAT'S A FEAST FOR THE SENSES.



Growing Guide on page 66

Feed your appetite for garden adventure with a little produce-aisle experimentation. First, feast on exotic fruits, then segue into seed-sprouting magic. You don't need a green thumb to score a success in this juicy undertaking—even inexperienced gardeners can pluck a seed from fruit, tuck it into soil, and enjoy eye-catching results.

With grocery-store gardening, the goal isn't a plantation, but a few houseplants to provide greenery and maybe some fruit. This project doesn't even demand a yard. Some of the nation's most experienced produce sprouters, known as The Rare Pit & Plant Council, hail from the Big Apple (where else?), meeting in high-rise apartments festooned with greenery grown from grocery displays.

Kids of all ages love the anticipation of waiting for "seedy" buried treasure to sprout. Invite the youngsters in your life to select and sample fruits and to harvest and sow seeds. Many life-long gardeners began their green-thumb adventures with a seed or two rescued from the kitchen compost bin and nurtured on a sunny windowsill.

These homegrown houseplants don't demand tropical conditions, though they do thrive in warmer temperatures (68°F–95°F). Harvest seeds from fruit and sow them in potting mix, not heavy potting soil or garden soil. Seeds can take up to 12 weeks to germinate. To speed the process, gently warm the soil by placing pots on a root-zone heating mat, available from a garden center or an online source. As seedlings unfurl leaves, keep soil damp but not wet and provide plenty of light. To encourage even growth, give pots a quarter turn weekly.



Opposite: Trips to the produce section of the grocery store or fresh market can be adventurous searches for potential plants that will add to your windowsill garden. Start your collection of houseplants from the seeds, pits, or roots of a few easy-growing favorites or more exotic fruits and vegetables. Above: In addition to the plants grown from these pits, other possibilities include kiwi, fig, date, guava, and mango.

Growing Guide

Avocado

(*Persea americana*) Avocado fruits boast large seeds or pits.





Step 1
Cut fruit carefully, remove the pit, and let it dry for 2–3 days. Peel away the papery skin. Cut a thin slice (⅛ inch) from either end.



Step 2
Plant the seed with the more pointed end sticking out of soil. Shoots take 4–12 weeks to emerge, so be patient.



Step 3
When the stem is 4 inches tall, add soil to bury the seed.

Ginger

(*Zingiber officinale*) Ginger grows from plump roots or rhizomes.





Step 1
Choose a rhizome having several swollen white nubs with pink tips. Set rhizome on soil and sprinkle soil over nubs, leaving part of the root uncovered. Cover the pot with plastic to raise humidity.



Step 2
When shoots emerge in approximately 10 days, remove the plastic.



Step 3
Snip shoots for cooking. Place pot outdoors for summer; harvest roots in fall.

Lemon

(*Citrus limon*) Lemon trees thrive as houseplants, possibly bearing fruit 5–7 years from seed.





Step 1
Pluck seeds from fruit and rinse them in warm water. Cover seeds with ½ inch of soil, water them, and cover the pot with plastic.



Step 2
If kept at 70°F, seeds sprout in 3–6 weeks.



Step 3
Keep soil damp after seedlings emerge. Citrus won't withstand wilting.

From Produce to Plants

Papaya

(*Carica papaya* 'Golden Caliman') Papaya serves up juicy, sweet fruit.





Step 1
Harvest seeds from fruit, spread seeds on a paper towel, and roll them until you feel seeds pop from their gelatin envelopes.



Step 2
Sow seeds immediately, barely covering them with soil. Keep soil warm (80°F) until sprouts emerge in 1–6 weeks.



Step 3
Do not overwater, or seedlings may dampen off (die) before they reach 6 inches tall.

Passion fruit

(*Passiflora edulis*) Passion fruit unfurls luxuriously exotic blooms.





Step 1
Scoop edible seeds from fruit, wash to remove pulp, and plant immediately. Space seeds ½ inch apart and barely cover with soil. Set the container in a warm (75°F) well-lit area to germinate.



Step 2
Sprouts emerge in 2–8 weeks.



Step 3
Shift seedlings into 3-inch pots when they begin to get crowded. Vines reach fruiting size 12 months from seed.

Star fruit

(*Averrhoa carambola*) Star fruit plants boast fun-shape fruit and leaves that fold at night.





Step 1
Remove edible seeds from fruit; roll them in a paper towel to remove the gelatin seed coat.



Step 2
Sow seeds immediately, covering them lightly with soil. Keep soil damp until seeds sprout in 7–25 days.



Step 3
Star fruit can thrive in air temperatures ranging from 68°F to 95°F. Plants need soil that's kept moist but drains well.



A RUSTIC BUT INVITING GREENHOUSE HELPS THIS COLORADO COUPLE JUMP-START THEIR PLANTS' GROWING SEASON.

Hobby House

WRITER: GEORGE HENDRIX
PHOTOGRAPHER: EMILY MINTON-REDFIELD
FIELD EDITOR: ELAINE ST. LOUIS



Opposite: Early each spring, Cathy Kimmal starts seeds such as this cosmos seedling in her Denver greenhouse. **This photo:** A zinc-top cupboard under an antique stained-glass panel from a Kansas church creates an artful pairing in a sunny corner of Cathy's greenhouse. A hanging tomato plant looks down on potted tomatoes, marigolds, a tub of arugula, a trough of baby basil, and a white gardenia.



"In February and March, I start growing seedlings. I'd never had a greenhouse before. It's been very useful." *—Cathy Kimmal*

Opposite: Slanted windows facing south provide reliable sun and warmth inside the greenhouse, where a tomato plant twines on a chandelier and collectibles gather here and there. Below: Cucumber, basil, nasturtium, and other seedlings wait for their turn to put down roots in the garden.



"I start getting itchy in March," confesses ardent Denver gardener Cathy Kimmal. As Cathy is painfully aware, though, March is a month early to be snipping open seed packets and hoeing neat garden furrows at the foot of the Rocky Mountains—and in much of the rest of America.

For that reason and many others, Cathy is grateful that the century-old house she and husband Will bought more than a decade ago came with a greenhouse. It's a homemade affair, leaning on the south wall of the Kimmals' freestanding garage. The acrylic-walled oasis of warmth offers rustic charm along with its season-extending bonus.

"In February and March, I start growing seedlings," Cathy says. "I'd never had a greenhouse before. It's been very useful." Heat-loving vegetables, such as tomatoes and eggplants, get the biggest boost from an extended spring stay in the sheltered space. Cathy also gets a head start sprouting herb seedlings and other vegetables for her kitchen garden. The potager anchors the abundant French-inspired garden encompassing a backyard that was, when the Kimmals took up residence, mostly bare dirt and weeds.

"We love French style," she says. The Kimmals have enjoyed the chance to study that style on buying expeditions to France for their Highlands neighborhood shop, The French Flat. In addition to


Château
Mouton Baron Philippe

Opposite: Just inside the greenhouse door, a French wine crate stores garden tools and a bunny hook rack keeps sun hats and umbrellas within easy reach. **Below left:** Cathy moves most of her gardening activities outdoors in summer, but she continues to start seeds in the greenhouse and nurture young plants there as needed. **Below, top right:** A split Dutch door allows Cathy to fine-tune airflow through the greenhouse. **Below, bottom right:** The green finishes on a vintage watering can, bucket, and pitcher represent a bit of the French flair that Cathy favors.







fresh-cut flowers and gift items, the shop showcases French collectibles and antiques.

Several of those antiques serve as greenhouse accents. Cream-color pressed-tin ceiling tiles cover a back wall (the outer wall of the garage). The tiles were reclaimed from a 19th-century building demolished in western Kansas. Cathy relaxes on a vintage wicker sofa and arranges pots and tin containers of annuals on antique wicker plant stands. She displays buckets and pots of heat-loving basil, orchids, and other plants on a 19th-century zinc-counter cupboard and an old-fashioned pie safe.

Vintage bricks that serve as the greenhouse floor soak up heat from light pouring through south-facing acrylic panels. The panels angle upward toward the garage in a simple homemade wooden framework painted white. Originally, several 55-gallon barrels filled with water served as heat sinks to capture and release the sun's warmth. Cathy's elegant replacement for those space-devouring barrels is a big rack of terra-cotta pots. Indeed, the greenhouse stays so reliably warm that the Kimmals turn on a small electric heater only on the most bitterly cold winter nights. "I've had roses blooming in the winter, and geraniums," Cathy says.

This warm and comfortable space also sometimes serves as a welcoming winter playroom when Cathy babysits her two grandchildren. "I'll sit out here and enjoy the day while they play," she says.

Below, top left: Nearly ready for the garden, seedlings benefit from the natural light and warmth next to south-facing greenhouse windows. Below right: Red cabbage seedlings grow well in vintage galvanized pans, thanks to drainage holes punctured in the bottoms. Below, bottom left: Cathy collects vintage seed packets for fun and antique tools for chores, storing them in galvanized trays in antique cabinets. Opposite: A set of old steps in the greenhouse are stacked with dozens of terra-cotta pots that are more than a handsome tableau: The clay pots, along with the floor bricks, absorb daytime warmth and release it on cold nights.







Greenhouse Basics

Greenhouses come in all shapes and sizes, from ornate conservatory-style structures of glass and metal to simple plastic domes erected over arcs of PVC pipe. The Kimmals' greenhouse is a simple lean-to of home center acrylic panels within a wooden frame. To make the most of your greenhouse and extend your growing season, follow these tips:

Consider location
Site your greenhouse where it will receive maximum sun, particularly on winter mornings.

Water wisely
You need to keep seed-starting mix damp but not wet. Avoid overwatering—it can promote disease.

Store the sun
Use heat-absorbing materials to help keep the greenhouse warm at night. Heat sinks, such as 50-gallon barrels of water, can radiate warmth for hours—so can floors of bricks or pavers.

Air it out
A warm spring day can produce blistering, plant-killing heat inside glass or plastic walls. If you don't want to shoulder the expense of an automatic ventilation fan or vents, open doors and manual vents during the day.

Watch closely
Pests and diseases spread like wildfire in a crowded greenhouse. At the first sign of sickness or infestation, isolate the affected plants and promptly treat the healthy plants.

Add warmth
A small radiant heater takes the chill out of the coldest nights. Easy does it though; a little heat goes a long way in the enclosed space of a greenhouse.

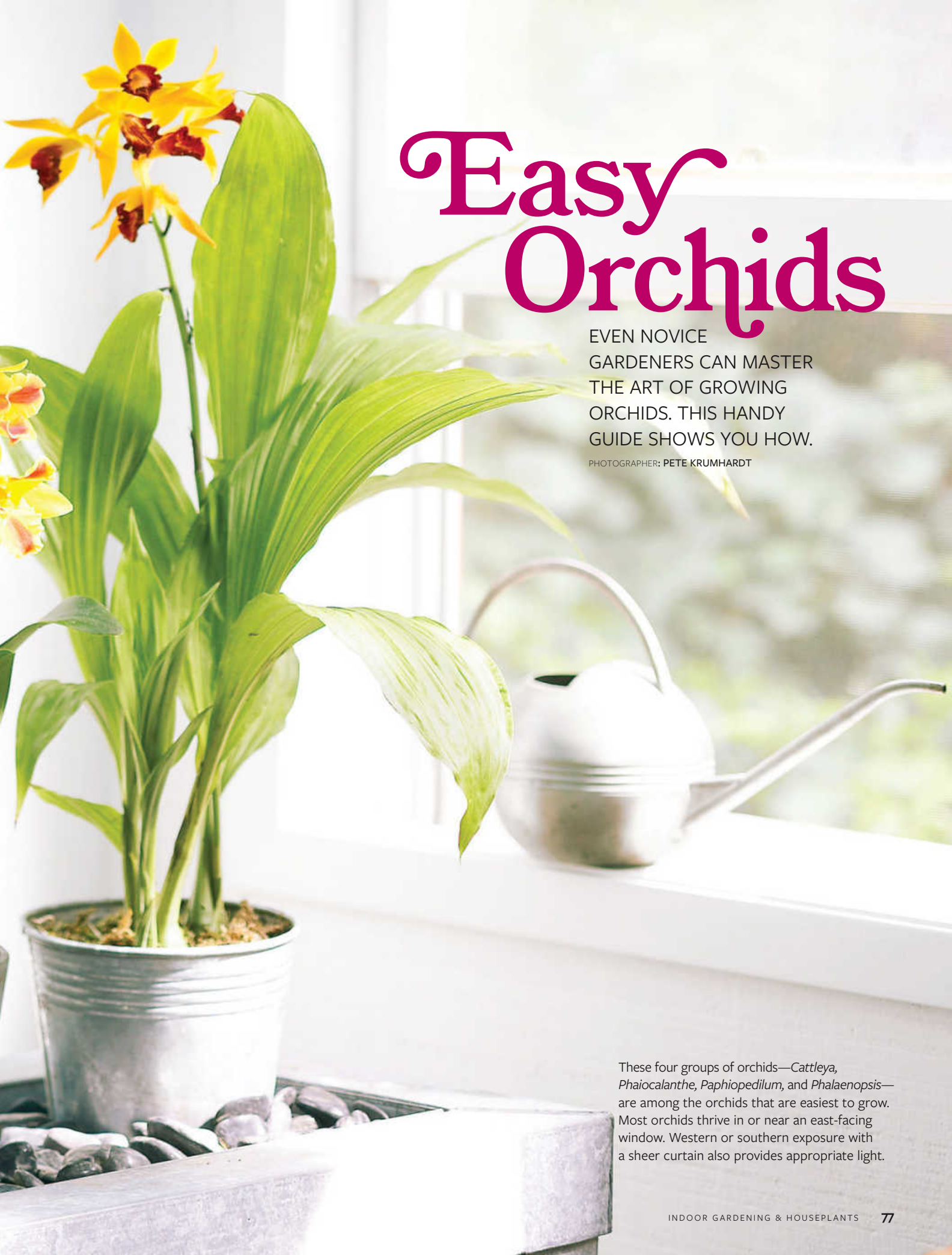




Easy Orchids

EVEN NOVICE GARDENERS CAN MASTER THE ART OF GROWING ORCHIDS. THIS HANDY GUIDE SHOWS YOU HOW.

PHOTOGRAPHER: PETE KRUMHARDT



These four groups of orchids—*Cattleya, Phaiocalanthe, Paphiopedilum,* and *Phalaenopsis*—are among the orchids that are easiest to grow. Most orchids thrive in or near an east-facing window. Western or southern exposure with a sheer curtain also provides appropriate light.

Few plants intrigue gardeners as orchids do.

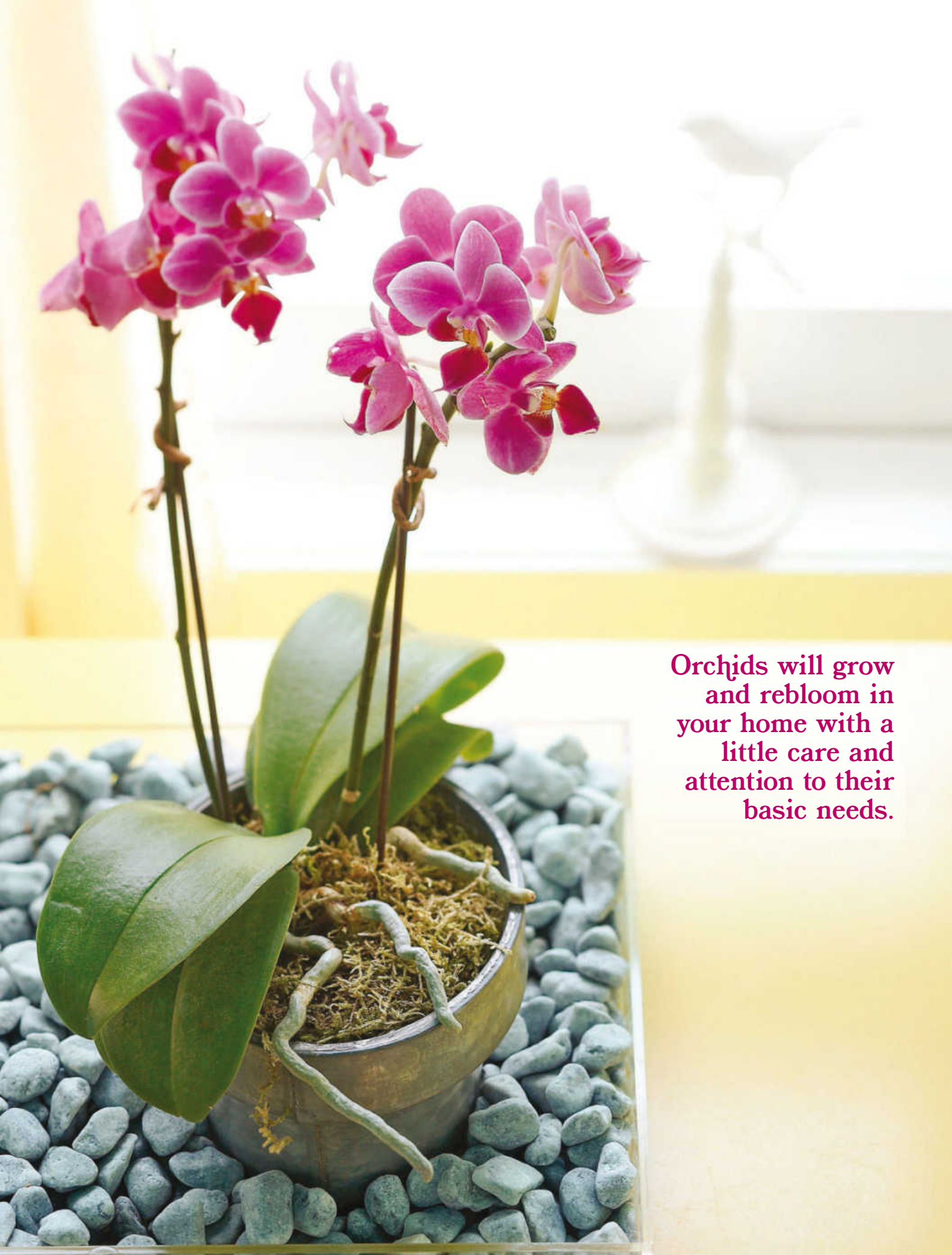
Their extraordinary blooms, endless varieties, and aerial roots make them fascinating and adaptable houseplants. Like no other flower, orchids captivate with their exotic charm. Although many of these exquisite bloomers hail from the tropical regions of Central and South America, Africa, and Asia, you don't need to live in the tropics—or even turn your home into a greenhouse—to grow them successfully.

Bring home an orchid and see how undemanding one can be. One secret: Start with an easy-to-grow type such as moth orchid, whose common name reflects the shape of its blooms. Varieties of moth orchid are among the easiest orchids to grow because they enjoy the environment most homes provide.



1. Plants from the *Paphiopedilum Maudiae* group of tropical lady's slippers are particularly good for novices because they tolerate ample moisture as well as lower light levels indoors. 2. *Phalaenopsis,* or moth orchid, has brilliant blooms that brighten the darkest days and last for two to four months. 3. Many hybrid *Cattleya* orchids, including 'Burana' (page 76, fourth from left) and 'Little Fairy' (shown), can do well indoors; place them near a bright window and let them dry before watering again. 4. Because nun's orchids enjoy moisture and are difficult to overwater, this leafy variety, including *Phaius* 'Joan Hart' (page 76, far right) and *Phaiocalanthe* 'Kryptonite' (shown), appears on lists of easy-to-grow orchids. 5. The most widely sold orchid, *Phalaenopsis* is also simple to cultivate as long as you let it dry between waterings. It tolerates lower light than most orchids, giving you more placement options in your home.





Orchids will grow and rebloom in your home with a little care and attention to their basic needs.









Growing Orchids Indoors

The exotic foliage and brilliant blossoms of orchids create an intriguing presence indoors. Orchids will grow and rebloom in your home with a little care and attention to their basic needs. Improper watering is the most common reason for failure, followed by poor light. If you find a well-lit location for your plant and water it regularly, you'll be delighted with the results.

1 Potting and repotting
Orchids don't like to be overpotted, so select the smallest pot size to accommodate the root mass. As a plant grows, the roots may grow outside the pot. This is natural and the roots should not be cut off or stuffed into the pot.

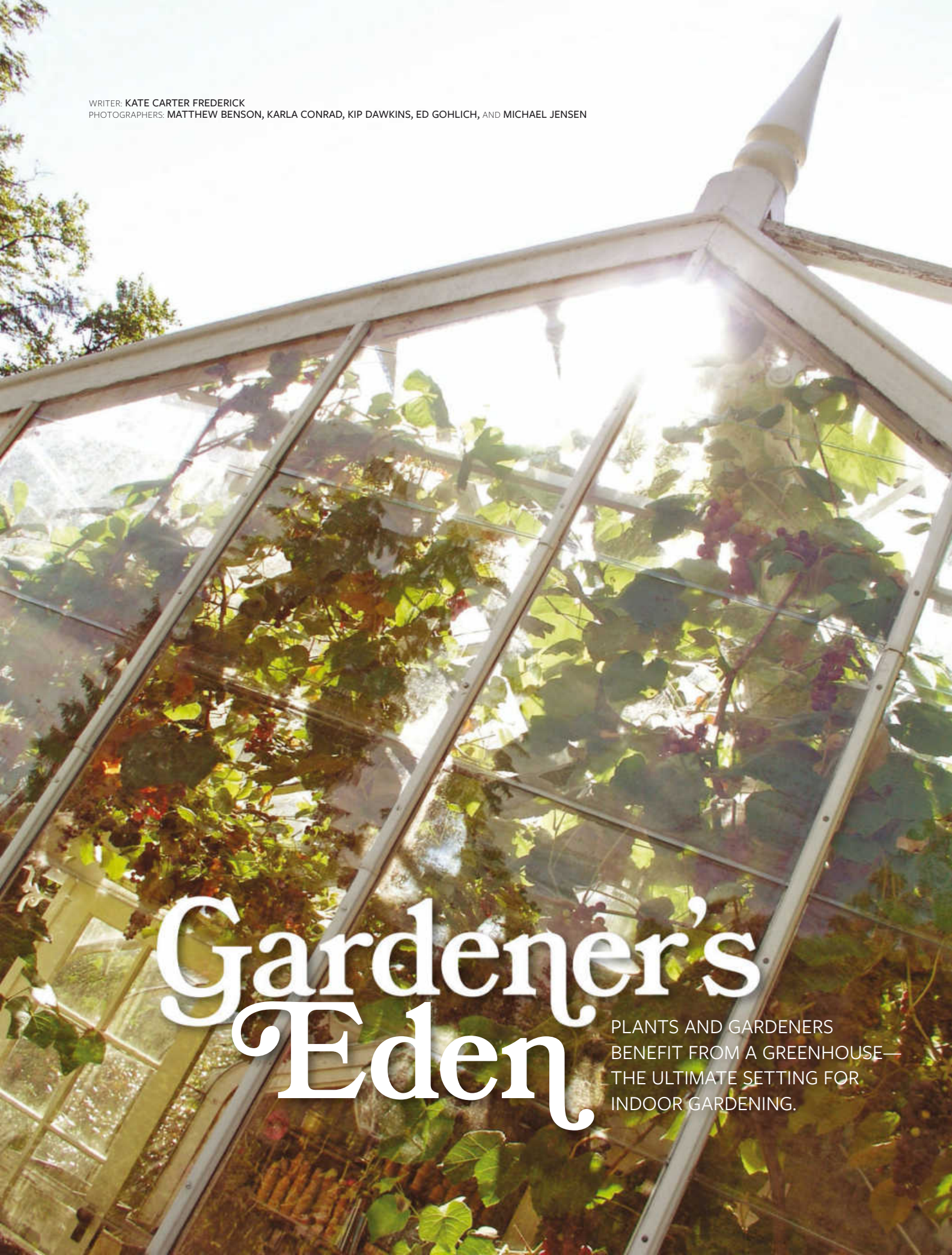
Every one to two years, repot an orchid in fresh medium. Bark works best because it doesn't retain moisture as well as other mediums so it is difficult to overwater. Sphagnum moss also works but has less margin for error. When repotting orchids, snip off any dead, completely shriveled, or broken roots.

2 Watering and fertilizing
In their natural habitat, orchids grow on tree trunks where they are frequently exposed to rain showers. Mimic this effect by watering plants with room-temperature water once a week. Feed plants using one-quarter strength orchid fertilizer each time you water. Soak the growing medium and allow it to thoroughly drain.

3 Boosting humidity
Although many orchids can survive low indoor humidity, a daily misting of the area around plant roots can be beneficial. Setting pots atop a bed of moist gravel helps orchids thrive. Keep the stones and tray clean and free of algae and accumulated minerals or salts by washing them in a weak bleach solution and rinsing thoroughly. Pots should not stand in water.

4 Staking
The tall, delicate flower stalks of orchids need support to avoid breaking. Use slender bamboo stakes and small decorative clips or soft wire to secure the stems.

WRITER: KATE CARTER FREDERICK
PHOTOGRAPHERS: MATTHEW BENSON, KARLA CONRAD, KIP DAWKINS, ED GOHLICH, AND MICHAEL JENSEN



Gardener's Eden

PLANTS AND GARDENERS BENEFIT FROM A GREENHOUSE—THE ULTIMATE SETTING FOR INDOOR GARDENING.



Open the door to a greenhouse

on a dull winter's day and escape into a gardener's dream where plants grow beautifully, no matter the weather, amid earthy aromas and a peaceful hush. The warm, humid, light-filled space supports a wider range of plants than typically grow inside a home. Flowers bloom every month of the year, exotic fruits thrive, fresh vegetables turn ripe for picking, seedlings sprout, and tender plants sail through winter. It's the ideal place to keep tropical plants that would ordinarily head to the compost heap at summer's end.

A greenhouse also supports happy gardeners. Picture yourself puttering away inside a climate-controlled haven tending plants or relaxing with a book—while rain or snow falls outside. As a garden room or an extension of your home, a greenhouse provides cozy living space. It can create a seamless transition between inside and out, and it can be used for work or entertaining as well as a personal retreat.

Opposite: The ideal greenhouse covering lets in the maximum amount of light while allowing the least amount of heat to escape. Also consider the material's longevity and upkeep. **Above:** A greenhouse that serves as a peaceful refuge includes seating and homey accents as well as work spaces and a sink.



Practical Considerations

Greenhouses come in a vast range of styles, sizes, and materials, but all are designed to capture light and heat by way of transparent roof and wall panels. Plan carefully to get a greenhouse that suits your needs, whether you buy a ready-made structure, assemble one from a kit, or build a glass house using salvage windows.

To get the most winter sunlight, a greenhouse should face south. Choose a site that receives at least six hours of sun daily. A heat-absorbing brick or paver floor can help keep the greenhouse warm at night.

Depending on how permanent you want a greenhouse to be, you can choose a freestanding or lean-to structure. For visual continuity, select a style that matches or complements the architecture of your house and outbuildings. Styles include A-frame, Gothic arch, gambrel roof, and domed. Some are raised on stone or concrete foundations. Northern dwellers will want a structure that shrugs off snow and ice; windows should be mounted low on walls, which increase the ability of the house to retain heat.

The climate of a larger house is easier to maintain than that of a small one because a large space is less prone to rapid temperature changes. An 8×10- or 10×12-foot house is usually adequate.

Research building plans and check out local codes for permit requirements. Temperature extremes in your region will determine the right materials for your structure. Glass is the traditional choice for its superior light transmission and longevity, plus it's scratch-resistant and easy to clean. Double-pane glass offers better heat retention but might require shade in summer. Plastic is strong, easier to install, less prone to breakage, and energy efficient for year-round gardening. It diffuses light and must be cleaned carefully to avoid scratching.

Above: More than a greenhouse, more than a garden shed, this wood-shingled cottage provides play space and work space. South-facing solar windows bathe the cottage with light, and a front porch invites relaxation. **Opposite:** This greenhouse built with cedar lumber and polycarbonate (strong plastic) siding has a built-in counter-height bench, drainable flooring, and a convenient centrally located door.









Top: When it isn't full of seedlings, the greenhouse serves as a place to store gardening supplies. Above: Gutters on the greenhouse catch rain and guide it into a vintage copper washtub-turned-rain barrel. Right: Southern exposure allows the greenhouse to hold heat and receive plenty of light for starting seedlings. The greenhouse door remains open throughout summer. An electric space heater warms the wood and glass greenhouse, starting in late winter.

Below left: A greenhouse attached to your house is convenient and eliminates having to build one wall. It also passively collects solar heat for your home. **Below right:** Comfortable and practical furnishings that withstand extremes of humidity and heat give a greenhouse multiple uses. A mesh or bamboo shade will help deflect the sun's hot summer rays.





Setting Up a Greenhouse

Working in a greenhouse will be more enjoyable if it is well arranged and outfitted to provide you with years of growing success. The needs of greenhouse plants are similar to those of other indoor plants for water, heat, light, and humidity.

Site

When determining the type of greenhouse and its location, consider how you will access water and electricity for it. If you plan to hook up to household utilities, make it as convenient and cost-effective as possible.

Water

A misting or drip watering system proves efficient, but most gardeners hand-water using a hose or watering can.

Light

Flowering plants and others needing the most light can be placed on tables or suspended from the greenhouse roof. Lower-light plants and those that prefer cooler conditions, such as ferns and clivia, can be placed on the floor and under tables. Supplemental light and heat may be necessary.

Heat

The plants grown in your greenhouse will depend on its minimum winter temperature. A warm (60°F–70°F) environment requires heating to maintain temperatures during bitterly cold nights, but it's ideal for orchids, hibiscus, and banana. A cool (minimum 50°F) greenhouse suits many plants, including jasmine, citrus, and *Stephanotis*.

Air

Humidity is usually higher in a greenhouse, so it may not be the best place for cacti and succulents. A fan bolsters essential air movement. Budget for automated ventilation or cut the expense by opening a door, windows, or manual vents to let in fresh air on warm days.

Supervision

Monitoring the conditions in your greenhouse will help make the most of it and ensure your plants' success. Maintain a healthy environment by keeping the space clean and quarantining new plants. Watch closely for signs of pests and diseases, and remedy a situation promptly.



A well-designed greenhouse provides a home away from home when furnished for everyday living.





Far left: This custom-designed greenhouse has a higher roof than is customary for home greenhouses and plenty of homey touches to make it more livable and pleasing for people. The greenhouse allows room for a small dining table, and the plants become objets d'art. **Above:** A frame of rot-resistant cypress on steel posts supports this cozy brick-paved greenhouse that measures 10×12 feet. **Left:** A vintage porcelain sink and gas space heater (tucked under the counter) prove essential.

WRITERS: CARRIE BEBRIS AND KATE CARTER FREDERICK
PHOTOGRAPHER: PETE KRUMHARDT



Starting Seeds

THE TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS INVOLVED IN STARTING PLANTS FROM SEEDS ARE FEW, BUT THE REWARDS FOR GARDENERS ARE GREAT.

Planting seeds indoors has practical benefits: saving money, getting a head start on the growing season, and selecting from varieties more diverse than those available at your local garden center. There are also the seemingly magical benefits of the joy and wonder that come with watching an innocuous seed sprout into a living plant. You will be so amazed and proud!

Knowing that your garden plants can be grown from seeds or seedlings (transplants), think ahead. When the outdoor world remains wintry, start vegetables, herbs, and flowers from seeds indoors, and be alert in spring to favorable conditions to sow them directly in the garden.

When purchasing seeds, check packets for freshness dates and choose the best varieties for your garden and climate. It's easy to get carried away and purchase too many seed packets. What's more, a packet of seeds includes dozens—even hundreds—of potential plants and most likely more than you will need for this year's garden. Buy only what you need and have room to raise, then save leftover seeds for next year or share them with friends and neighbors.



Opposite: Seed packets contain all the planting details needed: seed spacing, depth, number of days until maturity, and much more. Plant seeds in damp soilless seed-starting medium, following directions on the seed packet for the appropriate planting depth. Above: Seedlings root quickly and stay healthier when grown in a sterile, fine-textured seed-starting mix rather than soil. Commercial seed-starting mix, available from garden suppliers and nurseries, usually includes peat moss, perlite, and vermiculite. Pop-up containers made from peat moss pellets provide another option. Premoisten the medium—whether bulk seed-starting mix or pellets—by sprinkling it with warm water, then fill containers with damp mix.

Germinating Seeds

Germination is a seed's process of sprouting from a dormant plant embryo and growing into a wee plant. A seed stores the plant's initial food supply within its protective coating. What a seed needs from the gardener is conducive conditions (moisture, temperature, air, and light) for growth.

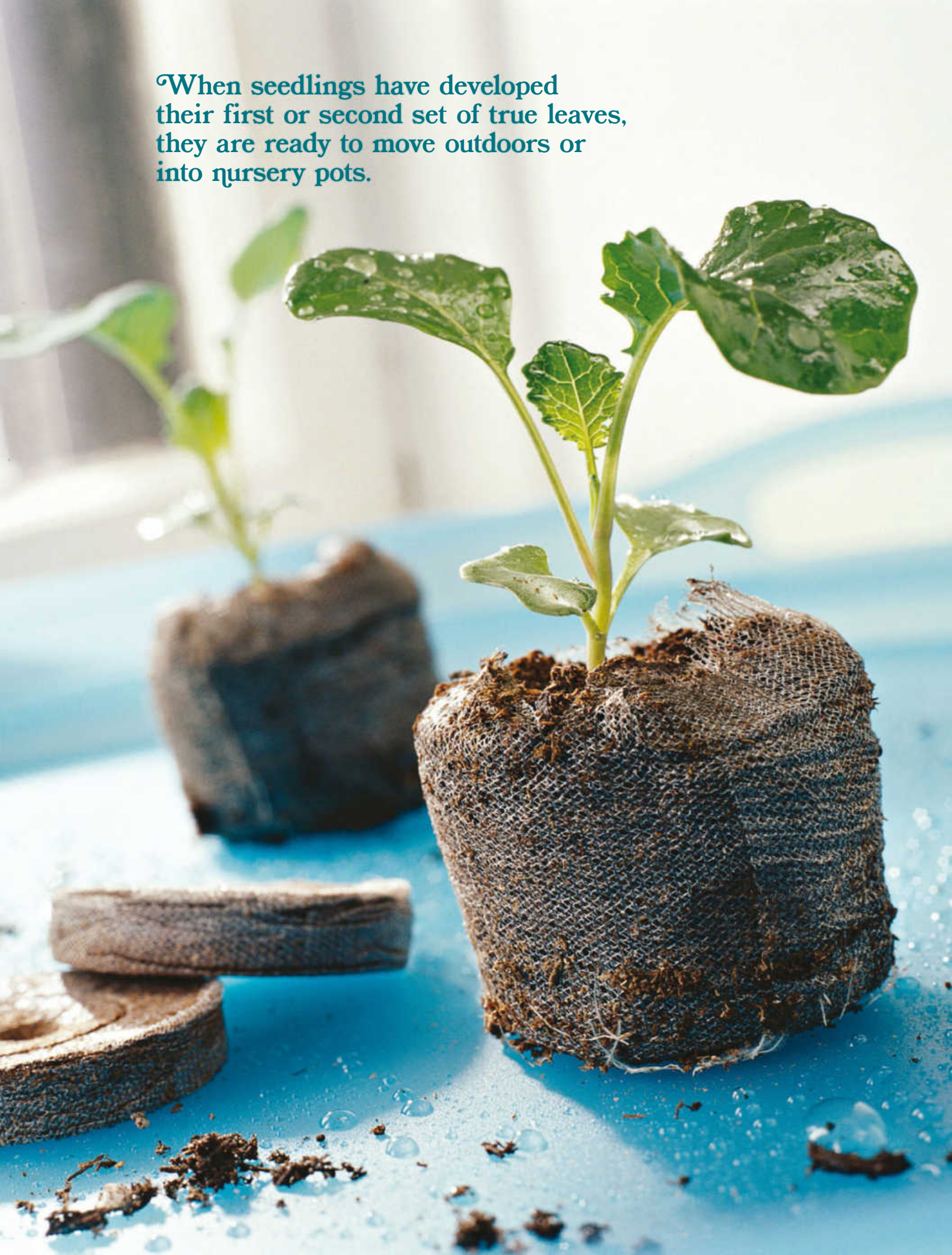
To sprout seeds, you need only a few supplies. It is possible to start a few seeds on a very warm and sunny windowsill. Better yet, set up a nursery on a shelf or a tabletop where you can be messy with soil and water, and there is access to electricity. Basic materials for a nursery include containers, soilless seed-starting mix, fluorescent light, heat mat, and timer for the light. A basic, inexpensive setup of equipment lasts for many years.

Start with clean containers that allow excess moisture to drain away. Plastic trays are sold in kits with planting packs and covers; the packs vary in size and number of cells for transplant-size seedlings. Some gardeners reuse plastic nursery containers, including flats, packs, and pots of various sizes. Others repurpose containers, such as yogurt cups and other recyclable plastic packaging. Wash containers in hot soapy water and disinfect with a weak bleach solution before filling with soilless mix.



Opposite: Light is essential for all seedlings. Supplement available sunlight with artificial light. A shop light fitted with two fluorescent bulbs—one warm light and one cool light—is an efficient, economical option that works well. Seedlings need 12 to 16 hours of light each day. Position supplemental lights just above the tops of the seedlings and raise the lights as the seedlings grow to promote dense, lush plants. **Right:** Uncover seedlings once they germinate (sprout). Water seedlings from the bottom, adding water to a watertight tray and allowing the young plants to draw up moisture via their roots. Watering from above and soaking the seed-starting medium may cause seedlings to rot.




When seedlings have developed
their first or second set of true leaves,
they are ready to move outdoors or
into nursery pots.

Leaving the Nest

As seedlings develop their first set of true leaves (after the initial seed leaves), the containers will become crowded and you will need to thin out the weakest seedlings. It's hard to get rid of healthy plants, but if you let the crowding continue, all the plants will suffer and fail to thrive. Keep the largest, healthiest seedlings and pull out weak plants or cut them at soil level. Transplant extraneous healthy seedlings into other containers. Leave at least an inch of space between the remaining seedlings or grow one seedling per container. As the survivors grow and outdoor temperatures reach the 50s°F and above, the seedlings are ready to "harden off" (get tough) by being set in a protected area outdoors, such as a entryway or porch, sheltered from sun and wind. After a few days, they're ready for their move to the garden.



Opposite: Biodegradable pots let you transplant seedlings directly into garden soil without removing them from the container, minimizing transplant shock.
Left: Start seeds in a stylish container such as a large clear-glass bowl if desired. A container without drainage holes can be made more hospitable to seedlings by filling the bottom third of the container with clean pebbles or glass marbles. Top that layer with premoistened soilless seed-starting mix. Plant seeds of lettuce, moonflowers, morning glories, or heirloom tomatoes. Mist the planting medium and cover the container with a sheet of plastic until the seeds germinate. For healthy growth, remove the plastic and give the seedlings adequate light.

TASTY, NUTRITIOUS, AND PERFECT FOR A WINDOWSILL GARDEN, THESE TEENY SEEDLINGS ARE GROWN FOR HARVESTING WHEN TENDER.

Microgreens

WRITER AND PRODUCER: **KATE CARTER FREDERICK**
PHOTOGRAPHER: **KARLA CONRAD**



How to Grow Microgreens Indoors

Among the easiest and fastest-growing crops possible, microgreens offer a range of fresh flavors, from mild to spicy, and inspire repeated plantings for an ongoing supply of tasty greens for creative uses.

The seeds of dozens of vegetables, salad greens, herbs, and edible flowers produce delicious young stems and leaves that are ready for harvesting—by snipping the stems—after only two or three weeks of growing. If left to grow, microgreens become young seedlings then full-fledged plants. Unlike sprouts (germinated seeds that are eaten roots and all), microgreens need potting mix and bright light to grow. They may have intense flavors similar to the full-grown plant or taste more subtle.

Chefs around the country first bolstered the itty-bitty greens to the hippest status among food trends. But you don't have to be a chef to grow microgreens. Just choose your crops with thoughts of how you will use them to elevate salads, appetizers, sandwiches, and other dishes to gourmet fare with a snip and a sprinkle. Microgreens offer a full palette of fresh tastes from mild beet to spicy arugula in hues of green, red, or purple. Their tiny-yet-textural leaves include heart-shape Brassicas (cabbage, kale, mustard, and others), frilly carrots, grassy onions, and paddlelike chard.

Home gardeners have caught on to the benefits of microgreens. One of the freshest forms of nutritious produce is also one of the easiest crops for a sunny windowsill. Although microgreens can be grown outdoors in a mild climate, they grow so well indoors, you'll want to keep a crop within arm's reach from month to month. Start with a single crop—the easiest ones are radish, kale, Swiss chard, broccoli, and mizuna. Or sow a mix of seeds with similar maturity rates and harvest a combination of colors, textures, and flavors at once.

Opposite: The tiny plants known as microgreens include back row, from left: basil, onion, radish; middle row, from left: kohlrabi, pac choi, beet; front row, from left: arugula, mesclun, and kale. The flavorful, versatile greens add vitamins, minerals, and crisp freshness to meals—all for little more than the cost of a packet of seeds.


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Step 1
Round up the materials you will need to sow the seeds of microgreens: 3-inch peat pots (or other suitable containers), potting mix, vermiculite, seeds, plant labels, and plastic wrap.

Step 2
Premoisten the soilless seed-starting mix, a sterile medium that is formulated to promote seed development. Sprinkle warm water onto the mix and blend until it is thoroughly damp.

Step 3
Fill each container with premoistened seed-starting mix—no need to pack it into place. Set the container on a watertight drip tray or saucer.

Step 4
Sprinkle seeds evenly over the surface of the seed-starting mix, sowing them more thickly than you ordinarily would. Leave at least a seed's-width of space between the seeds—even microgreens need room to grow.

Step 5
Cover the seeds with vermiculite. This mineral-based material absorbs water and releases it slowly, keeping seeds damp but not too wet. Follow instructions for planting depth provided on the seed packet. Some seeds should be barely covered; others need thicker covering to germinate (sprout and grow) well. Label plantings.

Step 6
Water the sown seeds with a gentle shower, soaking the vermiculite without washing away the seeds. Until the seeds germinate and green shoots sprout from them, water lightly as needed to keep the seed-starting mix damp. If the mix is too wet, seeds can rot and fail to grow.

Step 7
Cover the containers with a lightweight sheet of plastic or a domed lid to maintain humidity and promote germination. Set the drip tray on a heat mat designed for seed starting or on a heating pad set on medium.

Step 8
When the seeds germinate, remove the lid and the heat source. Set the containers on a sunny windowsill. Keep the planting medium damp and promote healthy growth by watering from the bottom: Pour water into the tray and allow it to be absorbed into the soilless mix.



Above: Harvest microgreens when you are ready to use them. Snip the tender stems just above soil level using sharp scissors.

Seeds

Sow microgreens with seeds available widely in packets or bulk. Organic seeds are preferred by some gardeners for growing edibles. A single packet of seeds typically produces one or two crops of microgreens in a 3-inch pot. Bulk seeds, most often sold in ¼-, 1-, 5-, or 25-pound packages, prove economical for microgreen farmers who grow crops on a commercial scale.

Buy seeds from a reputable source, such as your local garden center or an online seed company like *johnnyseeds.com*. Some sources offer high-quality microgreen seeds that are especially clean of foreign matter and other species of plants. They also have a higher germination rate (the number of seeds that sprout and grow). Store any leftover seeds in an airtight container in a cool, dry place. Use seeds within a year or two for best results.

Containers

Indoors, grow microgreens in a 3- to 4-inch-deep container that has excellent drainage. Three-inch peat pots fit on a windowsill and group readily in nursery flats. Plastic produce boxes, take-out food trays, and nursery flats also work well for growing microgreens. Many of these containers come with clear plastic lids that turn the containers into mini greenhouses. If the container doesn't have built-in drainage, poke a few holes in its bottom using an awl or knife tip. Wash containers using soap and rinse them with hot water before planting to help ensure healthy plant growth.

Light, air, and water

Grow microgreens indoors in the bright light of a south-facing window. When natural light is scarce and plant stems appear weak and pale, provide supplemental light using a shop light with two fluorescent bulbs: one cool and one warm light bulb or full-spectrum bulbs. Situate the fixture with the bulbs hovering no more than 2 or 3 inches above the seedling tops for dense growth.

Adequate ventilation also helps microgreens grow strong and healthy. A small desk fan improves air circulation.

The tried-and-true method of growing microgreens in a sterile, soilless mix entails careful watering. Too much water causes seeds and seedlings to rot, but crops fail to grow if given too little water. When the soilless medium begins to feel more dry than damp to the touch, remoisten it. Water microgreens by soaking the container's bottoms in a tray or saucer of water, as watering the tender plants from above often causes their stems to collapse and rot. Boost greens' vigor by fertilizing when you water, using a dose of liquid kelp according to product directions.

Harvest

Microgreens will be ready for harvesting at different stages of growth, from the appearance of cotelydons (the earliest, winglike seed leaves) to the first sets of true leaves. Most greens grow from 1 to 3 inches tall. Once harvested, the plants will not grow back.

Ensure microgreens' quality by cutting them at the optimal time—early morning or evening—and keep them cool and fresh until use. Harvesting plants that have been basking in the sun for several hours may result in wilted greens and disappointment. If you don't use the greens right away, keep them in the refrigerator for a few days up to a week stored in a plastic clamshell or resealable bag.



A Sampling of Microgreen Varieties

Start with your favorite vegetables and herbs when deciding which microgreens to grow. Dozens of crops and varieties prove popular as microgreens, such as arugula, basil, broccoli, carrot, and spinach. Consider other viable, lesser-known options, too, including amaranth, buckwheat, celery, lemongrass, popcorn, and sunflower.



Arugula
The spicy microgreens are ready for harvest in 7 to 10 days. Use arugula as a base in a flavorful mix of microgreens.



Basil, sweet
For the aromatic flavor of basil, harvest the microgreens in 16 to 28 days. Grow purple varieties for their rich color.



Beet, red
Beet varieties produce colorful microgreens with subtle, earthy flavor in 16 to 25 days. Soak seeds overnight to prompt germination.



Cress
Within 10 to 15 days, cut the super-peppery microgreens. Cress greens are especially tender and have a shorter shelf life than other microgreens.



Kale
The green or purple leaves are ready for snipping in 10 to 15 days. Rich in iron and vitamins A and C, kale greens have a sweet, mellow flavor.



Kohlrabi
Usually grown for the vegetable's crisp, tender flesh, the greens have a mild cabbagelike flavor. They're ready to snip in 10 to 15 days.



Mesclun
A mix of salad greens will grow in 16 to 25 days. Start with a ready-made blend or custom mix of seeds, including arugula, mustard, kale, chervil, and others.



Onion
Sow the seeds of *Allium fistulosum*, aka green onion, bunching onion, and scallion and snip the flavorful greens in 16 to 25 days.



Pac choi
The mild, sweet taste of this Asian vegetable is delicious on its own or in a mix of microgreens. Sow a green or red variety and harvest in 10 to 15 days.



Radish
An ideal starter plant, the fastest-growing microgreens have a mildly spicy flavor and require no special attention—just sow and grow for a crop in 7 to 15 days.



Sorrel
Red-veined sorrel adds color and tangy taste to mixes of microgreens. The seeds germinate readily and produce a crop within 16 to 25 days.



Swiss chard
The variety 'Bright Lights' has red, pink, or yellow stems and a mild flavor. Harvest the baby leaves in 16 to 25 days.

Creative Planting Projects

BABY, WHEN IT'S COLD OUTSIDE, WARM THINGS UP INDOORS WITH SOME SUNNY WINDOW GARDENING.



WRITER: KATE CARTER FREDERICK
PHOTOGRAPHERS: KING AU, KIM CORNELISON, REED DAVIS, PETE KRUMHARDT, MICHAEL PARTENIO, CELIA PEARSON, AND DEAN SCHOEPPNER



Top Shelf

These succulent *Kalanchoe* bloom for weeks in a sunny window. The removable glass shelves span the window and let plenty of light reach the plants. Repeated plantings create greater impact.



In the Pink

Look to houseplants for a wide selection of dramatically textured and colorful foliage. This grouping includes button fern, peacock plant (*Calathea*), pink geranium, rex begonia, and pink cyclamen. Group three or five plants with similar needs for light and water, and plant them together in a complementary pot at least 14 inches in diameter. Keep this potted garden going year-round. Between late summer and spring, place it indoors in a site where it will receive bright, indirect light. Before you let the potted garden vacation outdoors over the summer, remove the geranium from the pot and transplant it into a separate container. All the plants will have more growing room now. Set the potted garden in a place where it will not receive direct sun. Place the geranium in a partly sunny spot.

Woodland Under Glass

Convert a decorative cake stand with a domed glass cover into a centerpiece that resembles a tiny woodsy landscape. Use live moss gathered from your yard—not from the wild—or for a more permanent display, choose preserved sheet moss. To gather moss from the yard, carefully lift it with a small amount of soil attached. If using preserved moss, soak it in water for a minute or so, then wring out any excess water. Display the moss garden away from direct sunlight.


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1. Cover the platform of the cake stand with a layer of moss. Mound it in the center of the display for a more naturalistic appearance. 2. Add stones, twigs, pinecones, and other appealing items and arrange them as desired. 3. Lightly mist the arrangement, then place the glass dome over it. Mist the moss weekly or whenever it starts to feel dry.



Desert Dwelling

A drywaller's pan provides a sleek cachepot for small, individually potted plants, such as this collection of succulents and cacti in a south-facing window. Gravel conceals the pot rims.



High-Wire Act

Tillandsia, or air plants, hang in the air with the greatest of ease in glass ornaments strung on fine wire. The plants need no soil, only daily misting and weekly plunging into tepid water. Bright, indirect light keeps them growing.



Show Time

Pink primroses join fragrant hyacinths, English ivy, and chartreuse *Heuchera* (coral bells) in a ceramic planter for a display that lasts weeks. When the flowering plants fade, add them to the compost pile, but give the perennial *Heuchera* a place in the garden and the ivy a new pot of its own.



Hydrangea Blues

Although greenhouse-grown hydrangeas are gorgeous with their mopheads (whether in blue, purple, pink, or white), they have been raised for a spectacular one-time show indoors. Combine a hydrangea in a spacious pot with varieties of ferns and other houseplants that also like damp conditions. The hydrangea may be willing to move outdoors in spring and adapt to growing in the garden in Zone 6 and warmer.



"Herban" Renewal

Beauty and bounty come from aromatic herbs, including *from left* flat-leaf parsley, basil, Greek oregano, and rosemary, poised on a metal shelf mounted to the bottom of the window frame. Perch them in the sunniest window of the house for best results.



Wet and Wild

Floating water lettuce makes an instant water garden in a see-through container. Top off water in the container as needed and replace it when it becomes cloudy.

Ivy Enchantment

Create a delightful topiary in less than 20 minutes with flourishing ivy. Choose a plant with at least six runners or purchase six small ivy plants with one long runner each. Transform the plants into a captivating form by adding a spherical topiary frame to the potted planting.

1. Press the topiary frame into the center of the pot, anchoring it as deeply as possible in the soil.
2. Separate the ivy runners and wrap one or more around each of the wires in the topiary frame. If the ivy runners start out short, wrap them around the wires from time to time as they grow longer.


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Season's Promise

In late winter or early spring, buy small pots of prechilled spring-flowering bulbs, such as these 'Tête-à-Tête' daffodils and dwarf irises, and mix them with violas in colorful pots. More are merrier! Group the pots on a kitchen counter where you can enjoy them daily and easily water the plants as needed.



Delectable Citrus

ENJOY JUICY FRESH ORANGES, LEMONS, AND OTHER CITRUS FRUITS FROM YOUR OWN POTTED TREES.

PHOTOGRAPHERS: DEAN SCHOEPPNER AND DENNY SCHROCK

Yes, you can grow citrus trees indoors, and dwarf varieties are particularly well-suited to pot culture. Worthy candidates for homegrown citrus include calamondin, kumquat, Clementine tangerine, Mexican (Key) lime, 'Meyer' lemon, and myrtle-leaf orange. Citrus plants offer something for all seasons: glossy dark green foliage, sweet-scented blossoms, and colorful, long-lasting fruits (depending on the maturity of the fruit). The flowers will fill a room with their fragrance. Many citrus plants are available in striking variegated forms, which bloom and fruit as readily as all-green ones. Sometimes the fruits of indoor-grown trees are sour or bitter when eaten fresh, but they can be used to make luscious marmalade or candied fruit.

Where to begin

Start with dwarf-variety plants that will grow up to 3 to 6 feet tall indoors. (Other varieties grow to 25 feet outdoors, reach up to 10 feet indoors, and need regular pruning.) Set plants outside to summer on the deck or patio or in the garden.

For quicker rewards, begin with a good-size robust plant rather than a small fragile one. Pot a tree in a high-quality potting mix enriched with pine bark, sphagnum moss, and gradual-release plant food.

What citrus need

Adequate light is the key to success when growing citrus indoors. The trees will grow well in a sunroom or conservatory. Otherwise, situate them in a bright, south-facing window where temperatures range between 60°F and 85°F.

Water consistently to keep soil damp, when the top inch of soil has dried. Fertilize throughout the growing season. Give the plant a regular shower to clean dusty leaves. Prune citrus after flowering to shape the tree and remove any dead or damaged wood.

Citrus trees are suitable for home gardens in Zones 8–11. Gradually acclimate a tree to more or less light when moving it outdoors in late spring and back indoors in early fall. Once outdoors, progressively move a tree into more and more light for about three weeks. Reverse the process in fall to help a tree adjust to less light indoors. Citrus are sensitive to cold and should be protected from frost. Also protect trees from harsh winds outdoors.





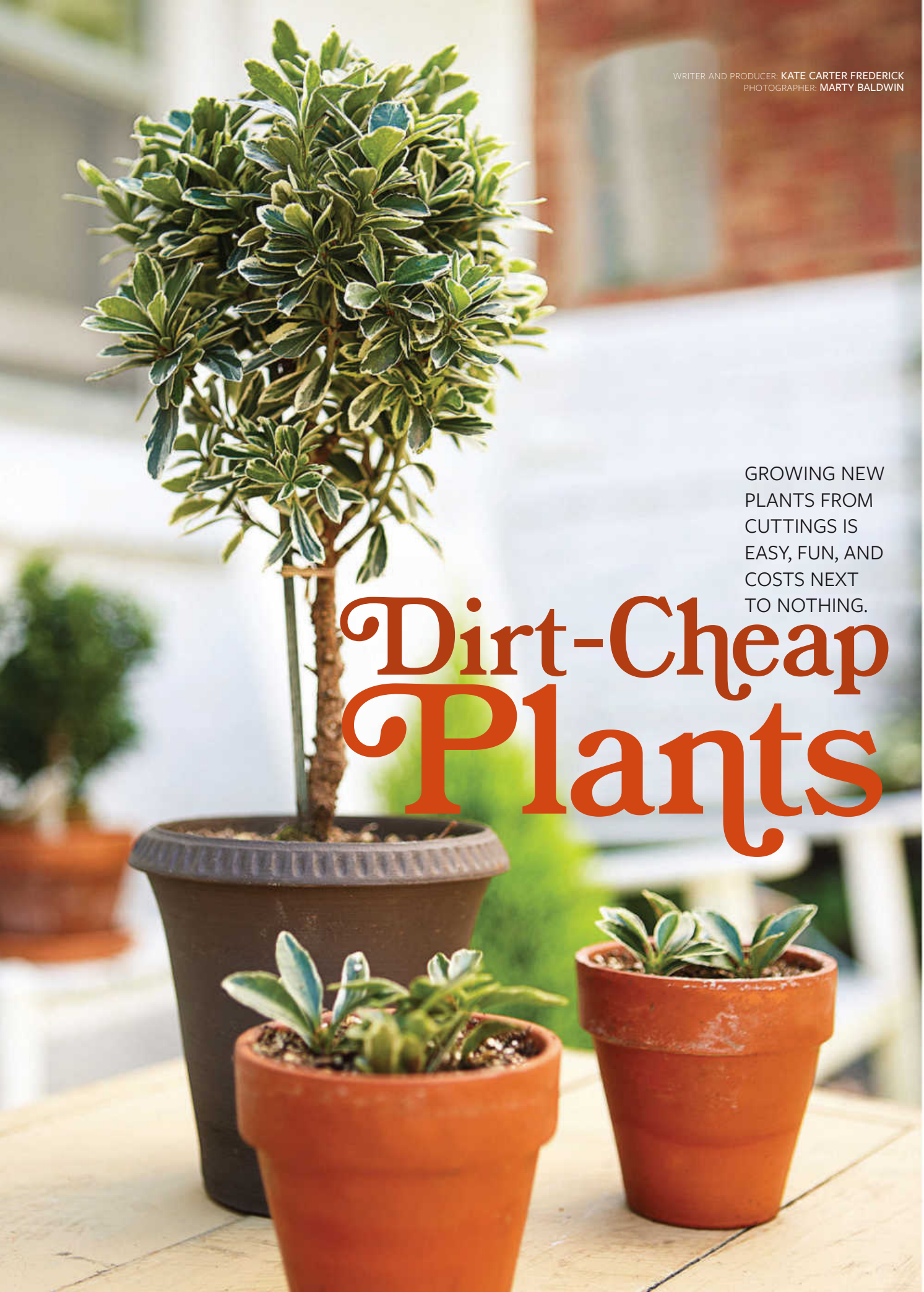


Above left: The blossoms of citrus trees rely on bees for pollination. Ensure fruiting indoors by aiding the process—you be the bee. Use a fine paintbrush to transfer pollen grains from the stamens of a flower to the pistils in other flowers.
Above right: 'Meyer' lemon is slightly sweeter than commercial varieties with a hint of tangerine flavor. Container plants reach 4 to 5 feet tall indoors.
Left: Potted citrus trees bring a touch of the tropics to a sunny room, especially during the winter. Among the best choices for container growing indoors are calamondin or miniature orange and 'Meyer' lemon.

WRITER AND PRODUCER: KATE CARTER FREDERICK
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARTY BALDWIN

GROWING NEW PLANTS FROM CUTTINGS IS EASY, FUN, AND COSTS NEXT TO NOTHING.

Dirt-Cheap Plants





It's easy to take cuttings of lavender, rosemary, geranium, and coleus.



An array of plants—from annuals, perennials, and shrubs to common species and hard-to-find varieties—will grow well from cuttings and be ready to transplant within a month or two. Growing houseplants from cuttings is the most popular form of vegetative propagation because it is so easy and rewarding. Just be sure not to take cuttings of copyrighted plants that say "propagation prohibited by law" on the tag.

Summer is prime time to take cuttings from plant stems and multiply your garden stock. When mother plants are healthy and actively growing, their offshoots will root most readily and grow into new plants. Cuttings will root in various media: a soilless mix, vermiculite, commercial rooting gel, or water.

Cutting Methods

Although it doesn't suit every plant, rooting begonia, Swedish ivy, purple passion, and others in water is super easy. Just cut a 3- to 4-inch stem tip, snip off the lowest leaf stems, and tuck the cutting in a jar of water set in bright, indirect light. Change the water weekly to keep it fresh and minimize growth of bacteria. When roots develop, transplant the cuttings into a pot of regular potting mix. Roots formed in water are finer and more fragile than roots formed in soil, so keep the potting mix evenly damp for the first couple of weeks to help the plant adjust and develop new roots.

The most common propagation methods for indoor plants include taking cuttings of young, green (softwood) stems from late spring until midsummer when plants are growing strong or cut partially matured, current-season (semiripe) stems from June through August. Depending on the plant, you can take cuttings from stems as well as leaves or roots.

Take leaf cuttings of houseplants with thick leaves or leaf stems, such as African violet, begonia, peperomia, and succulents of all kinds. Remove the leaf as close to the parent plant as possible. Dip the cut end in rooting hormone powder and tuck it into damp rooting medium, following the directions for stem cuttings. After a few weeks, roots will start to form; within a few months, new leaves will emerge.

To make a new houseplant from a root cutting, cut a 2-inch section of thick root and place it horizontally in rooting medium. When a new plant develops, transplant it as you would other cuttings that have rooted. Plants suitable for root cuttings include *Cordyline* and arrowhead.

Opposite: One mother plant, *Euonymus japonicus* 'Microphyllus Aureovariegatus' topiary, produced several passalong plants for friends. This topiary's neat form requires regular snipping, making it a prime candidate for semiripe cuttings.
Above right: When mature, the fancy-leaf geranium 'Wilhelm Langguth' (*Pelargonium* × *hortorum*) will have silvery green leaves with creamy white edges and double scarlet blooms. Plant this annual in ordinary soil and fertilize lightly. Too much fertilizer promotes excessive foliage growth and sparse flowers.

Cut and Cut Again

Follow the step-by-step guide, *opposite,* to this rewarding means of multiplying some of your favorite plants, and next thing you know you'll be sharing loads of freebies with friends and family. Take cuttings throughout the summer and nursery them outdoors to garner an ongoing supply of new plants.

Geraniums—including the fancy-leaf 'Wilhelm Langguth' *shown on pages 115 and 117*—are among the easiest plants you can duplicate with stem cuttings. Prepare nursery containers by filling small pots or cell packs with premoistened soilless mix, whether you make it and keep some handy or start with packaged seed-starting mix. Cuttings may rot if placed in soil because it holds too much moisture.

While your cuttings are developing, water the soilless medium regularly to keep it damp but not wet. When the cuttings show new growth, remove their plastic covering. In another week or two, your new plants should be ready for transplanting into a larger container. It may take a few weeks or more for the youngsters to reach garden-ready size, depending on the type of plant.



Top: At the end of the growing season, cut tips of plants you'd like to grow again next year and root them indoors in vases of water set in bright, indirect light. Plants that root well in water include *Tradescantia,* scented geranium, coleus, English ivy, geranium, begonia, and Swedish ivy. When roots develop, pot the cuttings in soil and grow them indoors until it's time to transplant outdoors in spring. Above: Make a soilless propagating medium that works well for cuttings of leaves, stems, and roots: Mix equal parts sterilized coarse sand, perlite, peat moss, and vermiculite.













How to Make Stem Cuttings

Materials

Small pots or cell packs

Soilless seed-starting mix (equal parts peat moss, perlite, vermiculite, sterilized coarse sand)

Mother plant

Small knife

Rooting hormone powder

Chopstick or pencil

Plastic bag and twist tie

Water

Step 1

Prepare nursery containers by filling small pots or cell packs with premoistened soilless medium. Potting soil and regular potting mix hold too much moisture. Select healthy, nonflowering stems from the mother plant for cuttings. Use a clean, sharp knife to cut a 3- to 4-inch shoot below a leaf node (the spot where a leaf emerges from a stem *as shown*). Cut off the bottom leaves of the shoot and snip off any flowers or buds. This prompts the plant to use its energy for rooting rather than growing leaves or flowers.

Step 2

Encourage root growth by dipping the cut end into powdered rooting hormone. Cover any cut parts with the powder.

Step 3

Use a chopstick or a pencil to poke a planting hole in the damp soilless medium.

Step 4

Slide the cutting into the planting hole without knocking off the rooting powder. Gently press the medium against the stem.

Step 5

Slip a plastic bag over the nursery container and twist tie the bag shut to create a humid, greenhouselike environment that will boost the cutting's growth. Set cuttings in bright, indirect light. Open and water as needed to keep the medium damp.

Step 6

A few weeks after taking a cutting, check its root development by gently tipping the container on its side and tapping out the soil and rootball. A new plant will be ready for transplanting when roots appear strong and have begun to fill out the inside of the nursery pot.

CONCERNED ABOUT A BROWN THUMB? WITH THESE ENDURING BEAUTIES, ANYBODY CAN BRING PLANTS INTO THEIR LIVES AND ONTO THEIR WINDOWSILLS. NO EXCUSES.

50+ Indestructible Houseplants

WRITER: TOVAH MARTIN
PHOTOGRAPHERS: KINDRA CLINEFF AND MARTY BALDWIN





1 *Plectranthus amboinicus* 'Variegatus'
2 Flamingo flower (*Anthurium* 'Red Hot')
3 *Kalanchoe beharensis*
4 *Sansevieria trifasciata* 'Moonshine'
5 *Sansevieria trifasciata* 'Black Star'

Good choice!
This plant is nontoxic and a good choice for households that include children and/or pets.





6 ***Begonia bowerae* var. *nigramarga***
7 ***Rhipsalis* sp.**
8 ***Philodendron hederaceum* 'Brasil'**
9 ***Iresine herbstii* 'Blazin' Lime'**
10 ***Iresine herbstii* 'Blazin' Rose'**
11 ***Plectranthus discolor* 'Green & Gold'**
12 ***Schefflera arboricola***

The weather is lousy outside, but it's nothing that a little haworthia won't fix. The climate has been abysmal all week, but thanks to the *Anthurium*, you hardly notice. Houseplants can come to the rescue no matter what's going on outdoors. With a hoya wafting its perfume beside your favorite sink-in comfy chair, life is good. And with the *Kalanchoe* sending its spark of electric color from the corner in the breakfast nook, the vibe is elevated for the rest of the day.

If your house is lacking in light or deficient in humidity, you can still garden indoors, and perhaps your office cubicle could benefit from a bit of botany. If you think you lack a green thumb, plenty of difficult-to-get-wrong plants are waiting to be adopted.

Plants that shrug off insults have been around since the Victorians started inviting botanicals indoors on a regular basis. But a new generation of houseplants is fully equipped to live happily ever after on anyone's windowsill.

Tough cookies never looked this good. Although the plain *Aglaonema commutatum* was willing to survive all manner of abuse, who cared? That changed with a recent breakthrough series of hybrids boasting leaves dotted and dashed by cream-and-pink spots and streaks, and shiny, forest-green foliage edged and veined with scarlet.

Similarly, philodendrons stepped into the limelight with a new trend toward multicolor leaves, including chartreuse, cream, and pink marbled leaves. And these are just the beginning.

Before you bring any plant into your home, make sure it works with your family. Some houseplants are toxic and must be kept out of reach of youngsters and pets. Consult the Poison Control Center in your area or check the guide to pet-safe gardening from the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (*aspca.org*) for more information. See additional details on *page 128*.

If you used to think houseplants were too difficult, think again. Choose one of the many foolproof plants available for a range of situations—and for the brownest of thumbs. Plenty of options await to brighten your home and boost your gardening confidence.



13 *Aglaonema* ‘Sparkling Sarah’
14 *Aglaonema* ‘Crete’
15 *Philodendron erubescens* ‘Pink Princess’


16 *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana* 'Pearl Bells'
17 *Kalanchoe figuereidoi*
18 *Aloe* 'Pink Blush'
19 *Echeveria* spp.
20 *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana* cv.
21 *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana* cv.
22 *Echeveria nodulosa*
23 *Euphorbia milii* cv.
24 *Echeveria* spp.
25 *Aloe* 'Silver Ridge'
26 *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana* cv.
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27 *Hoya pubera*
28 *Hoya compacta*
29 *Ficus deltoidea*
30 Golden pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*)
31 Geranium (*Pelargonium* x *hortorum* 'Tricolor')
32 Cast-iron plant (*Aspidistra elatior* 'Milky Way')
33 *Dracaena deremensis* 'Lemon Lime'













34 Spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*)
35 Jade plant (*Crassula ovata*)
36 *Peperomia caperata*

37 Fittonia 'White Brocade'
38 Fittonia 'Red Anne'
39 Chinese evergreen (*Aglaonema* spp.)
40 Snake plant (*Sansevieria trifasciata*)
41 Cacti collection









Tips for Healthy Houseplants

Every season has its foibles, especially in a garden—even an indoor one. But winter brings challenges in temperature and light. During this chilly, low-light season, most plants grow more slowly than during spring and summer, which can mean less upkeep. Here are a few tips that may help if needed.

Choose a proper pot
Some plants, including begonia, *Cineraria,* forced bulbs, fuchsia, jasmine, prayer plant, and Swedish ivy, have horizontal roots and prefer shallow pots. Others, such as camellia, citrus, clivia, gardenia, hibiscus, passionflower, and rosemary, flourish in deep containers because their roots plunge straight down.

Repot
Repot plants every two to three years, when roots grow out of the drainage holes, or if the plant is underperforming. Repot any pot-bound plant in a container 2 inches larger in diameter and depth; use fresh potting mix.

Rotate pots
Regularly rotate pots clockwise one-quarter to promote even growth.

Temperature
Situate a plant according to the temperature and light requirements noted on the plant tag. Supplement low winter light with a grow-light if necessary. Avoid placing plants near heat vents and air-conditioners.

Dormancy
If plants fail to bloom, they may need a period of dormancy. To promote this, move the plants to a cooler room and turn the thermostat down at night.

Winter
Fertilize lightly, if at all, in the winter and water plants less frequently. Plants in small pots or plants with hairy leaves should be watered from the bottom pot basin, not on the soil. If plant leaves turn brown around the edges, boost humidity.



42 Bird's-nest fern (*Asplenium nidus*)
43 *Selaginella* 'Frosty Fern'
44 *Plectranthus discolor* 'Green & Gold'
45 Croton (*Codiaeum variegatum* 'Revolutions')
46 *Peperomia argyreia*
47 *Peperomia caperata* 'Emerald Ripple'
48 *Selaginella kraussiana* 'Aurea'
49 *Cryptanthus bivittatus*
50 *Polypodium formosanum*
51 *Pilea involucrata* 'Liebmannii'

How to Repot a Root-Bound Plant

With a little imagination and help from a drill, this overgrown aloe is getting a whole new look.















Step 1
Turn the plant upside down to reveal the root system, and check to make sure the root network is healthy and has filled the container. If the roots are sparse, you can still do a makeover—just select a container the same size as the previous one.

Step 2
If the roots warrant a promotion, find a container that is at least an inch wider than the original pot (don't shy away from a funky style). With the help of a drill, you can put in at least three drainage holes, which are key. Drill holes an inch or so apart using a metal bit. If you are working with a clay pot, use a masonry bit. (Caution: Drilling might damage a container; don't try this with a valuable one.)

Step 3
Tease roots free from the root ball so they'll quickly penetrate the new soil. If you want to share the bounty with friends, separate off a "pup" with as many roots as possible. Slip the mother plant into its new container, adding soil around the original root network. Be sure to press the soil around the roots, eliminating any empty holes.

Step 4
Pot the "pup" separately, firming the soil around the roots and giving the division plenty of expansion room to start a new family.

Step 5
Water to keep the roots moderately moist and position the plant out of the baking sun for a brief adjustment period. One or two weeks should do it. Then place the plants in a sunny window. Your indestructible houseplant has received a makeover that will add life to your room for years to come.



Toxic Houseplants

Most plants are harmless, but some are poisonous and should be grown with caution, especially if your household includes young children and pets. Be careful when growing plants with spines or thorns, such as cactus, pygmy date palm, and sago palm. Parts of poisonous plants or sap from them can be harmful if touched, chewed, or swallowed, causing allergic reactions, dermatitis, skin irritation, stomach upset, or worse from internal poisoning. The good news is that most potentially toxic plants must be consumed in large quantities to cause damage; they pose a risk only as a mild or moderate irritant. Often the bitter taste repels a child or pet and stops them from ingesting much of the plant. Among the toxic common plants are caladium, *Clivia*, daffodil, *Dieffenbachia*, Easter lily, English ivy, oleander, peace lily, philodendron, pothos, and ZZ plant.

To prevent problems, when you bring a plant into your home, look it up online and determine if it is safe or has any potential toxicity. Place plants out of reach of children and pets. If a plant is ingested, remove the rest from the mouth and rinse the mouth with water.

If you suspect that a child or pet has been poisoned by eating or touching a houseplant, call the 24-hour National Capital Poison Center at 800/222-1222, or call your doctor, veterinarian, local hospital emergency room, or acute-care clinic. It helps to have a plant sample, photo, or name of the plant with you when you make the call to correctly identify the problematic plant.

Poinsettias are not poisonous, although it's wise to keep children or pets from eating them because they might have been treated with pesticides. However, they do contain a milky sap that can cause an allergic skin reaction similar to the latex allergy some people experience. If you're sensitive to latex, use caution and wear cotton or leather gloves when handling poinsettias.

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